

Installing a Water Garden Checklist

By Tara Schatz

Features

- If you have a small yard or you are renting your home, consider a barrel pond in a large half wine barrel.
- If your yard contains formal hedges and plantings, try a geometric pond.
- If your garden is more naturalized, an irregular-shaped pond would look lovely.
- A small fountain would be ideal next to your patio or outdoor seating area.
- Small ponds require less care and large ponds make ideal habitats for fish, salamanders, and frogs.

Location

- Flowering plants like water lilies are stunning in a backyard setting, but they require six hours of sunlight to thrive. If you want to create a habitat for flowering plants, be sure to locate your garden in a sunny spot.
- If you plan on digging a pond in your yard, be sure that the area is not in a low spot so it will drain properly.
- Placing your pond near large trees will mean digging around roots, which can be significant obstacles.
- Children safety issues surrounding water features. Babies and toddlers can drown in just a few inches of water.
- If you are going to create a fountain as part of your water garden, you will need to install your water feature near a source of electricity.

Find your Container.

- A half wine barrel.** These can be found at garden centers or wineries. Be sure they do not have drainage holes. Once you add water to your barrel, the wood will swell, sealing any leaks or cracks. If you plan on keeping fish in your barrel pond, be sure the barrel is at least 18 inches deep.
- Livestock trough.** These make easy water garden containers. Because they are made of metal, they should be kept out of direct sunlight so they don't overheat.
- Prefabricated rigid pond liner.** Come in many shapes and sizes. You will have to dig a hole to match the shape of your pond liner.
- Flexible pond liners.** Probably the easiest to install for the novice, they take the shape of whatever hole you dig. They are usually made of PVC and come in a variety of thicknesses. The thicker the plastic, the more it will cost but will last longer.

Dig your pond (if using a liner):

- For flexible liners.** First use a garden hose to outline your desired size and shape. Dig your hole at least 18 inches deep if you plan to grow water plants or keep fish.

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- For rigid liners.** Outline the pool's position with landscape paint or a garden hose. Dig your hole two inches deeper and wider than your rigid liner.
- Use a level throughout the digging and placement process.** A pond that isn't level will create runoff in your yard whenever the water level gets too high.
- Remove stones, sticks or other debris from the bottom of the pond so your liner doesn't get punctured.**
- Add two inches of damp sand to help create a nice level surface for your liner.**
- Put your liner into the leveled hole.** If you are using a flexible liner, you may have to trim the edges.
- Use decorative stones to cover the edges of your liner.**
- Install a pump for a filter, fountain, or waterfall.** Pumps help aerate your pond, keeping the water healthy for plants and fish. Pumps will also circulate water in a fountain or waterfall feature.
 - Select the right size pump for your pond.** Submersible pumps are usually placed in the bottom of your pond. They range in size from 50 to 50,000 gallons of water per hour.
 - Position the pump on top a concrete block on the bottom of your pond to minimize debris in the filter.**
 - Wire the pump underground to a nearby outlet.** Be sure to use a ground-fault circuit interrupter for safety. Use a timer for better energy savings.
 - Attach flexible tubing to the outflow of the pump to create movement.-** This can be attached to a fountain or a waterfall, or you can just leave it open on the bottom of the pond to keep the water from becoming stagnant.
- Choose your plants and animals.** This is the most fun part of any water garden project.
 - Water lilies, cattails, and other water plants are becoming more common.**
 - Plant water-loving perennials around the edges of your garden for a naturalized look.**
 - Goldfish and koi fish will thrive in your outdoor pond, at least during the growing season.** You may need to put them in an indoor aquarium if you get really harsh winters.
 - Frog eggs and tadpoles.** Can be bought at your local pet store.