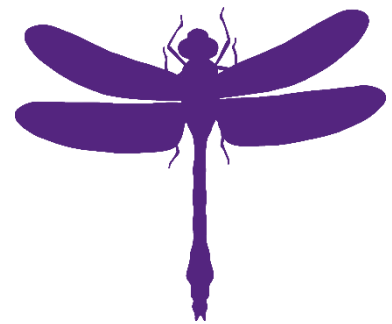


Wildlife ponds

Ponds are oases of biodiversity. Unlike other water ways they are often not connected to one another so are only fed by rain or groundwater. Despite this, they are unique habitats and can be a key refuge for lots of wildlife. Here's some of the most important things to consider when creating and looking after a pond.

- **Location** – When you make a new pond, consider where you position it. Ideally a pond should be in an area where it gets some sunlight but there are also areas of shade. This helps create light areas for plants to grow as well as shady areas for some of the more secretive insect species. Also consider if there are any trees nearby. Lots of leaves falling or blowing into the pond can cause issues and will need scooping out. A few leaves are okay and can help to create a layer of debris for wildlife to hide in at the bottom of the pond.
- **Soil and liners** – The best type of soil for a pond is clay. Clay retains water well although can be hard to dig out! If you don't have clay soil, you may need to consider a pond liner or a pre-formed pond to place. The Freshwater Habitats Trust have some great information about choosing a pond liner on their website. Check out the useful links section for the link.
- **Size** – Big ponds can be home to lots of wildlife, but they also require more work to look after! Smaller ponds are also great and can be adapted to fit the space you have available. If you are concerned about children or pets around a bigger pond, consider a mini-pond. Alternatively, use a natural hedge around larger ponds to prevent any accidents. A large wire grid over the pond can also help. Be sure to avoid a fine mesh as wildlife can get caught if it's too small!
- **Water supply** – It's useful to consider where you will get your water supply from. When filling a pond, rainwater is the best option. Use water from a water butt if you need to top your pond up. Alternatively, just let it fill naturally when it rains! Tap water can contain high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous. This can prevent pond plants growing and encourage pondweed to take over.





- **Water level** – Don't worry if the water level in your pond varies in different seasons. Most of wildlife in ponds has adapted to varying water levels. In warmer weather you might notice the water level drop a bit. If it looks very low, you can top it up with a bit of rainwater.
- **Depth** – A good wildlife pond has a variety of depths. Most wildlife can be found in less than 5cm of water. Aim to have both shallow and deep sections of water. Shallow water and muddy areas provide valuable habitat for lots of insect species to lay their eggs in.
- **Shape** – Wildlife isn't too worried about straight lines and nice shapes! This means you can fit the shape of your pond to the space you have available. Irregular shapes can help to make a pond look more natural. They also help to provide more space on the pond edges which creates more habitat.
- **Features** – You can add some underwater habitat by adding stones or branches. These help to create microhabitats for insects to hide away. A few areas that stick out of the water are also great for creating perches. These are helpful for bees, butterflies and birds to rest and have a drink. In bigger ponds, large islands can attract ducks. While ducks are characterful creatures, they can reduce the biodiversity in a wildlife pond.
- **Sharing isn't caring!** – When it comes to ponds, sharing isn't caring. Moving wildlife between ponds can transfer harmful diseases and bacteria. Avoid bringing in pond life from other ponds. Wildlife will find it's way into your pond in it's own time!
- **Managing** – Ponds can take a bit of work to look after them. It can take a good while for a pond to become a thriving habitat so be patient if you are creating a new pond! To help encourage wildlife, avoid using chemicals like weed killer or pesticides in your garden. These chemicals can harm all wildlife and can also have devastating impacts on the ecosystem in the area.
- **Plants** – A variety of plants are a key part of a good wildlife pond. Pond plants can be split into 4 rough categories;
 - **Marginals** – Plants that grow at the edges of the pond or in boggy areas.
 - **Emergent plants** – These species grow in areas of shallow water.
 - **Floating plants** – Plants that have floating leaves and flowers. This includes the well-known lily-pad type plants.
 - **Submerged plants/Oxygenators** – These plants help keep the pond water healthy. Be aware that some species of oxygenators can be fussy with conditions so might not be suited to smaller ponds.

For more ideas on which species to plant, check out the planting section at the bottom of [this guide](#) from The Wildlife Trusts.

Useful links

- We have a guide on [how to create a wildlife pond](#) on the Scottish Wildlife Trust website.
- The Wildlife Trusts have several pages on how to create your own wildlife pond on. [This guide](#) goes through how to make a wildlife pond and includes some suggestions of wildlife friendly pond plants. If you have a smaller area, there is also a great guide for [making a mini-pond](#).
- The Freshwater Habitats Trust have a fantastic document on [creating your own wildlife pond](#). It includes a troubleshooting section to help identify and fix issues with your own pond.
- The Freshwater Habitats Trust also have a [pond toolkit](#) with fact sheets about the different stages of pond creation and management. The pond management factsheet is particularly useful. You can find the main pond creation toolkit page.
- The RSPB have lots of good information on wildlife ponds on [their website](#). They also have [guidance on herons and fish ponds](#).
- OPAL have put together some useful resources including a [guide on how to run freshwater surveys](#). The guide includes some useful tips on surveying water quality as well as rating the health of a pond.
- OPAL also have a simple [freshwater invertebrate identification guide](#) which is helpful if you are doing some pond dipping!