Creating a pond for wildlife

A good pond will entice a wide and colourful variety of animals, birds and insects which can provide hours of entertainment.

PONDS AND THE LAW

Before rushing out with a spade to make the first cut, find out if there is any legislation controlling whether or not you can create a pond. Generally speaking, a garden pond can be built without too much worry.

USES OF YOUR POND

What will the pond be used for? Do you want it to fish in, keep wildfowl on or simply sit by the side and watch the world go by? Its ultimate function will determine the size, depth and position of the pond. For example, a good pond for wildfowl does not have the same features as a pond for amphibians. This information sheet concentrates on creating a conservation pond, that is, a pond which attracts as many different types of wild aquatic plant and animal life as possible such as frogs, dragonflies and beetles.

POND RULES

As with many things, there are certain rules to follow in creating a healthy and thriving pond.

WHERE TO PUT THE POND

Choose a light and sunny position which has a certain amount of shelter - south-west facing is usually the best. Light is essential for plant growth and plants are essential as food for many animals. Trees can act as shelter, protecting the pond to a certain extent from adverse weather. Avoid overhanging trees as these will cast shade over the pond in summer and choke the pond with dropped leaves (if trees are deciduous) in autumn. Bacteria break down matter such as leaves and use oxygen in the process. Large numbers of leaves result in large amounts of bacteria getting to work and the amount of oxygen used becomes so large that other pond animals are denied oxygen and suffocate. If there are trees nearby, or you plant close to the pond, make sure they are on the north side so they do not cast shade, but will create a windbreak from colder north winter winds.

It seems to be the obvious thing to build the pond at the bottom of an existing slope. Don't! In periods of

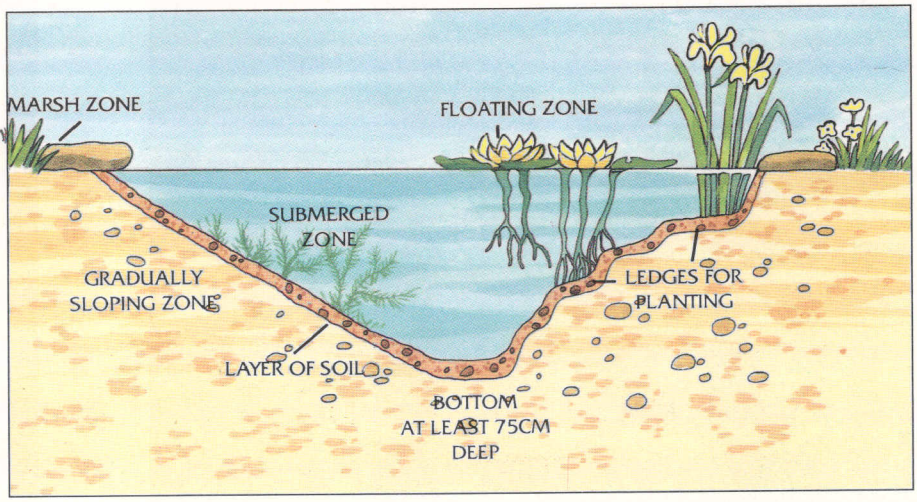
heavy rain, water will run down the slope and could flood the pond.

SIZE AND SHAPE

Generally, the larger the pond the better but remember that the pond has to be looked after once made and a large pond may get out of hand. Choose a size to fit the time and enthusiasm that is available, now and in the future. Also consider the amount of manpower/machinery available in the long-term for the necessary management of the pond.

Give the pond lots of curves as this increases the amount of space available for plants to take root and animals to shelter, as the margins are an important part of the pond system.

Make the shelter or have at least one side gently sloping. This lets the pond animals, such as amphibians, crawl in and out of the water. It is also an important escape route for land animals that fall in. Include ledges around the side of steeper slopes to create a place to put plants. The more variety in the depth of the pond, the greater the variety of



plants will take root and the more animals will colonise the pond.

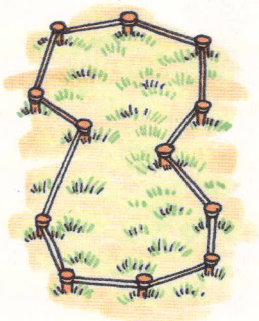
Don't forget the cost! The amount of liner that you need will increase as the pond size increases, and this could prove costly.

Generally, the size and shape will depend on the amount of space available, money, and the ultimate function of the pond.

Depth

One or more areas of the pond should be at least 75cms deep to provide an escape for animals in winter if the pond surface should freeze. The same areas will also create cool havens if the summer sun warms the water too much. Again the role of the pond will affect the depth. For example, amphibians prefer shallower ponds than wildfowl.

SAFETY



This is possibly one of the most important things to be considered especially if there will be children regularly using the pond. Gently sloping sides will let someone safely walk out of the pond if they fall in, and keeping the middle as shallow as possible will reduce the risk of drowning.

DRAWING A PLAN

This will give you a better mental picture of the final pond and how it will fit in with the surroundings.

If you are having trouble deciding on the final shape and position, try marking out the pond with pegs and string. This means you can see what shape you prefer before committing yourself by digging the hole. You could fill the pond in if you don't like it, but string is a lot easier to put right!

POND HABITATS

1) MARSH ZONE

This is the boggy area around the edges of the pond where, in the wild, species such as sedges, rushes, Ragged Robin and Marsh Marigold grow.

2) THE EMERGENT OR SWAMP ZONE

The shallow edges around the pond make up this zone. The main types of plant that grow here are - Flag Irises, Bullrushes, and Branched Bur-reed.

3) THE SUBMERGED ZONE

The bottom of the pond and all areas under the water are grouped together as the Submerged Zone. This zone is inhabited by plants which live totally submerged in water - Water Milfoil and Water Starwort are good examples. Plants which live here are the most important form of plant life to the overall ecology and health of the pond as they release oxygen into the water.

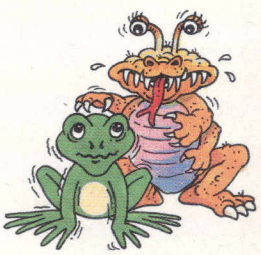
4) THE FLOATING ZONE

This is the surface of the pond where the leaves of plants such as Water Lily float.

5) THE BORDER ZONE

A pond will have more wildlife value if it is surrounded by other types of natural habitat. Marshes, Meadows, Hedgerows, and Woodland (as long as it is a suitable distance away so leaves don't fall into the pond) are examples of such habitats.

STOCKING THE POND



The golden rule to remember when stocking the pond with either plants or animals is to introduce only NATIVE SPECIES.

BE PATIENT!

Building up a diverse range of animal life in a pond is a long process as the best way to leave the pond alone. Many animals will find their own way there and ponds need to develop an ecological balance naturally.

SOIL

Most plants need soil before they can grow, and whatever lining you've used for the pond, there will not be any. Even clay linings need soil added to them or the plants' roots will grow through the clay and create leaks.

WATER

If you fill the new pond with water from the tap, leave the pond alone for 48 hours to give time for the chlorine present in tap water to disappear.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR POND

Building the pond is the easy part! The work doesn't stop there; once built the pond has to be constantly looked after to prevent it from becoming overgrown, polluted or dry.

THINK TWICE ABOUT INTRODUCING FISH INTO THE WILDLIFE POND!

Most fish will eat the tadpoles and eggs of amphibians.

For further details on creating ponds send a SAE to the Pondwatch Campaign at The WWT, for a price list of their pond literature.

It's a frog's life!

A frog's life can be an eventful one, from the frogspawn stage through the four seasons to Winter hibernation.
There's fun then danger and above all you'll learn more about our wonderful wetlands.
So cut out our friendly frogs, use a dice or the spin wheel and get hopping!

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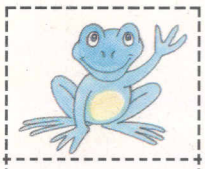

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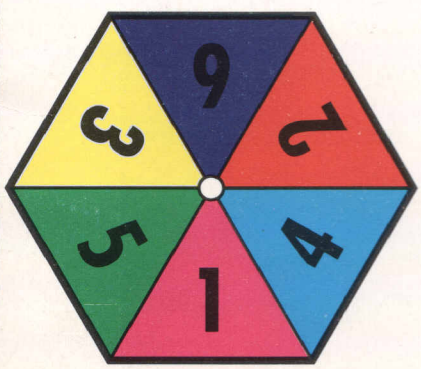

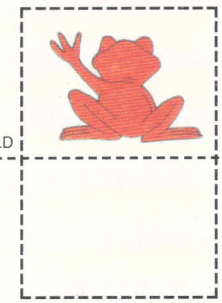

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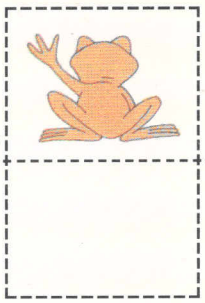

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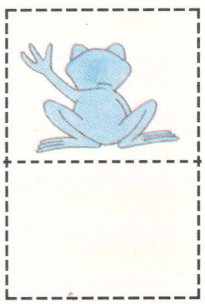

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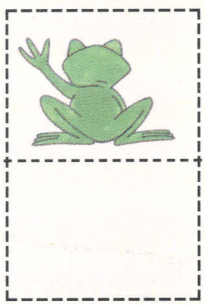

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