

Warwickshire

Wildlife Trust



MAKE YOUR OWN
SCHOOL POND

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Planning Your Pond

Ponds are one of the best ways to attract wildlife into your school grounds.

No matter how large or small, a pond will guarantee the arrival of a whole range of wildlife including frogs, newts, insects and plants.

It will provide an excellent educational resource, right on your doorstep and is an exciting way to get children inspired to explore wildlife.

Activities such as pond dipping will provide an opportunity for children to view habitats, food chains and adaptations through first hand experiences.

By creating your own pond you will be helping to support our declining population of wildlife by providing a variety of creatures with the perfect home!

The first step to creating a great pond is the planning! The planning of your pond will ensure that it's healthy and provide an ideal habitat for wildlife.

Collect opinions and suggestions

Talk to members of the school about what they would and wouldn't like. Consider a questionnaire.

Consider the constraints

Think about what's already there, the cost and potential health and safety issues (see pages 10 to 11).

How long will it take? Put together a timescale for completion and a 5 year management plan. Think about what time of year you will have to start work and carry out maintenance. Consider creating a committee to manage the maintenance of the pond.

Work to clear objectives. Decide exactly what you want to get out of your pond.

Location

Find a sunny spot where the pond is likely to get sunlight for at least half the day. This is to keep the water warm and in good condition for growth.

Decide a location that works best for your grounds and compliments existing structures.

A pond is best positioned away from trees and shrubs likely to drop their leaves as this can swamp the water.

Accessibility

Think about pond accessibility. You might consider paving around the edge or creating a platform, this will be ideal for pond dipping.

The Best Pond Design

A below-ground pond with flexible lining is best suited for a wildlife pond as it allows for a variety of depths, including the very shallow edges. This saucer shaped profile will encourage a variety of habitats.

Gradually sloping or shelved edges are a good idea to allow any creatures to crawl out easily. A gently sloping shallow area will warm up quickly and provide a great area for insects and a place for birds to bathe. A shelved level of 20cm to 30cm deep can provide a place to sit emergent plants. Make sure one area of the pond is at least 75cm deep to ensure hibernating creatures don't freeze during the winter months.

Additional Shelter

Frogs and newts do like to shelter in long grass or shrubs, so let an area grow long near the pond. You could even build a log pile or rockery nearby where they can hibernate.

Now you can get started with building your pond!

Building Your Pond

Once you have decided what pond size will work well within your school grounds, you can start digging!

Get People Involved

Seek support and volunteers from the local community with posters, leaflets, letters to parents and get in contact with your local newspapers. Involve pupils as much as possible.

What you'll need:

- Digging Equipment
- Spirit Level
- Liner*
- Sand
- Underlay/protective matting/old carpet/newspaper (with staples removed)

*For calculating liner: $(\text{Width} + \text{twice max depth}) \times (\text{length} + \text{twice max depth})$ with 1m for edging

1. Mark out the size of the hole (you could use twine or sticks). Start by removing the turf, but remember to keep it for tidying up the edges of your pond at the end.
2. Dig the hole approximately 20cm deeper to make room for the sand, matting and liner. Use a spirit level to make sure the edges are level.
3. Fill the pond with sand to the depth of 5cm and cover with underlay.
4. The next step is to line your pond. Remove any sharp stones protruding from the hole that may damage the lining. Lay the liner over the hole and then weigh down the edges (you can use bricks or stones). Fill the pond with water. The weight of the water will fill all the contours of the pond. Wait until the pond is completely full and then either bury the edges of the liner in a trench of soil or trim off the excess, making sure you leave at least 20cm.
5. A bucket full of water from an established pond is the finishing touch to help kick start your pond's development.

Now you can enjoy the arrival of a whole range of creatures, it should only take a couple of weeks!

Maintaining Your Pond

Keeping Your Pond Clear

If any vegetation starts to overwhelm the pond, it will need clearing. Autumn is the best time to carry out this work. Remove half of the overgrown plant by hand weeding, digging or cutting. When you remove plants from the pond, remember to leave them at the side of the pond to allow any creatures to crawl back out into the water.

Water Levels

Water levels will naturally fluctuate during the seasons, this can be essential for various creatures. You won't need to add further water to the pond unless it falls very low.

Pond Health & Safety

Pond Safety Guidelines

Your pond should be no deeper than 450mm and needs to be fenced to a minimum height of 1200mm with a lockable gate and the timber should be treated appropriately.

If you decide to have a pond-dipping platform again it should be fenced to the sides and the front to a minimum height of 1200mm all surfaces should be slip resistant.

Visibility

The location of your pond must be visible from school buildings. This is to ensure that in the case of an accident it is more likely that someone will be seen or heard. It must be away from regularly used paths and public access to reduce risks of vandalism and trespassers.

Security

The pond must be fenced off and must be a minimum of one meter high with a lockable gate. The edges of the pond must be clearly visible. There must be appropriate warning signs visible to clearly indicate the presence of a pond.

Risk assessment

It is essential that the school carries out risk assessments of the pond.

An emergency action plan must be in place in the event of an accident prior to use of your pond.

Groups using the pond must be supervised at all times with an appropriate ratio of staff to children. A safety talk must be given to children to ensure they understand how to stay safe when using the pond.

Using your pond

Create lesson plans relating to the pond and make sure that you make the most of it using its great curriculum links.

Review your success

Review if the pond has been a success – is it being used and maintained regularly?

Further Information



If you would like further advice or information or are interested in other educational services we can provide please contact us:

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