

Planning of a Water Garden Feature in the Garden

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Newsletter 3.1 February 2001

Considering putting in a water feature? First off I would have to ask what exactly are you looking to achieve with this feature. Many people see a pictorial in a magazine that shows an elaborate water garden and the first impulse is to attempt to put in the same kind of feature in their own garden. The key is to avoid such impulses and look into what it is about the feature you saw, that appeals to you.

A water feature does not necessarily imply a pond, think of what is being achieved. Is it the sound effect of splashing water, colorful fish or koi, the choice of plants or simply the aesthetics of integrating a pond in the landscape?

If sound is the primary reason for setting up a pond, an alternative might be a millstone water feature where water is bubbling up from the center of the millstone and splashes down over river stone. A relatively inexpensive option that may produce the same effect is the use of a waterproof container sunken into the ground with a mesh covering over the opening. Cover the mesh with large enough stones or pebbles, so as not to fall through, hooking up a small water pump to operate down below and pour water through a separate feature over the stone. The effect is similar, with the dripping water echoing through in the sunken container. This feature also works well in a half barrel placed on a deck or patio, making it a portable water feature.

A water feature for the sole purpose of keeping fish has its own considerations. Aeration and algae control because of the fish waste is essential for keeping the fish healthy. Over wintering and summer heat stresses must be planned for with protection from the elements. Predators such as raccoons, large birds and felines must be kept at bay also. Plant material in the pond, be it water lilies, floating plants or marginals must be carefully situated. Koi are related to catfish and as such have a tendency of disturbing the soil of potted up plants in the pond- sending them floating up to the surface of the water. Compartmentalizing the pond to keep the fish at bay helps the situation, but will not save the floaters. Plants can coexist with fish and koi, planning is required, patience is demanded and determination on behalf of the pond keeper to make it happen a necessity.

The other options left for wanting a water feature - the aesthetics of a pond and the choice of plant material - is equally as important for the gardener as the previous considerations. The primary use the pond will receive should be looked at closely. There is nothing more aggravating than having a pond setup where it is easily view, only to have the flowers closed when you come home or leave for work. A night blooming tropical is an option, they open in the late afternoon and do not close until late morning. Thereby giving at least some show for the appreciative owner.

Locating the pond close enough to a viewing area is also of importance, be it a gazebo, solarium or breakfast nook. Look from where the most viewing will be done and plan from there. Take into account if you want some winter interest with a waterfall, ice can form interesting features on a flowing waterfall and after a snowfall the garden takes on a magical wonderland appeal. Like any other design element in the garden, personal preferences play a role. Not everyone will want a

cookie cutter pond in their backyard. The style of pond plays just as important a role in the landscape as the pond itself. Incorporate the pond into the landscape, do not just plop it in the middle of the landscape, creating an island of water in a sea of turf. Consult as many books on the subject or check out the local garden centers, more of them are carrying a selection of water plants with informed staff on water gardening. Use the resources at hand and make an informed decision as to what exactly you are looking for in a water garden design. The same time and effort that is spent on a terrestrial planting should be put into an aquascape. Enjoy the possibilities water gardening has to offer.

