HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN WILDLIFE POND – PART 2
CREATING A STREAM

If you want to attract wildlife into your garden, read on!

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Busy weekend at Blackbirds as we finished off the second part of our new wildlife pond.

In my last post I went through how we made the basic pond. In this post I’ll explain how you can add a little stream to feed the pond.

Three months on and it looks like it's been there forever.

The thing to remember when constructing any water feature that is intended to attract wildlife, is to leave it as natural as possible. Let the weeds and grasses grow away, and introduce plants that attract insects, the classic wildflowers such as Red Campion, Cornflowers and Field Scabious.

Basic components to make your own little stream are:

1. Underlay to protect the liner (purpose made or off cuts of old carpet will do).
2. A narrow strip of liner, preferably butyl and at least double the width of the finished stream.
3. A pump to recycle the water from the pond to the top of the stream.
4. A length of pipe to carry the water from the pump to the top of the stream.
5. Cobbles and Pebbles to line the bottom of the stream.
6. Good quality soil to line the banks of the stream.

Forming a Basic Stream Shape

As we had the soil left over from excavating the pond I used it to build up the levels just enough to create sufficient fall for the water to gradually creep it’s way from the feeder pond down to the main pond. I’m not looking for anything too dramatic by way of falling water as Water Lilys are not keen on fast running water and I love to see them flowering in mid summer.

Although it may look like a lot of work, all I did was take my trusty little garden spade, landscaped the mound, and then dug out a small trench approximately 1/2 metre across from the edge of the pond to the top of the mound. It took me all of Saturday morning to finish the shape, and the rest of Saturday was spent laying the liner and setting up the pump.
Lining the stream

To line the bottom of the stream I used a couple of old pieces of carpet we had left over from the old house, and managed to find a suitable off-cut of pond liner at the local Aquatic Center for £30, which went straight on top of the liner. I remember watching Geoff Hamilton prepare a stream when he hosted Gardeners World and he virtually back filled the entire length of the stream with a shallow layer of soil and pebbles.

Mainly to hide the nasty black liner, but also to encourage new plants and wild grasses.

The finished stream made for a more natural looking pond and it kept the water crystal clear.

I’m not sure why, but it worked for Geoff, so I thought I’d give it a go. You could always add loads of rocks and stones, but I’m after a more natural looking stream so I’ve also gone for a mix of soil and pebbles. The logs were salvaged on a recent walk to the woods, and the few plants I had to plant on the marginals came from the old house.

Pumping the water

It’s really simple, all you need to do is attach a length of pipe to the pump and run the other end up to the feeder pond. If you don’t want it to look naff it’s best to bury it along the bank of the stream, hiding the end with a few stones and logs.

Getting power to the pump is not overly complicated, but unless you know what you’re doing it’s best left to a qualified electrician.

How much did it all cost?

The most expensive item of the project was the pump, which cost just under £100. It was more than I’d planned to spend, but I needed a pump powerful enough to get the water 8 meters from the pond to the feeder pool at the top of the stream, so I guessed it will last me a few years to come.
The rubber liner was £30 and the pebbles and stones were all salvaged from other parts of the garden, and a few were ‘relocated’ from the front drive 😊. Total cost £130.

If you need to keep the cost down make a smaller feature, which in turn will require a much smaller pump.

As you can see from the photo’s the banks are still pretty bare, but in the next few weeks I plan to sow a mix of grasses and wildflowers, along with a few native marginal plants like bearded iris, Caltha palustris, and Zantedeschia with its lovely white trumpet flowers on long slender green stems. The important thing is to make sure the soil on the bank is at least 30cm (1ft) deep to stop it drying out and allow a few marginal plants a fighting chance of survival.

Finishing touches

Last job was to add a few logs and some pinecones for effect, along with a modest log pile, which should help the wildlife to settle around the pond. Since the weekend the stream has attracted loads of visitors, including native birds that come to drink and to take a much-needed bath. I can’t wait to see what else we can attract as the local wildlife seeks out some much needed water as we all bask in this wonderful Spring sunshine we’re enjoying at the moment.

Don’t forget to leave me a comment if you like what you read.

Best wishes,

Tania. (www.ruralgardener.co.uk)