



FROM A GARDENING PERSPECTIVE

Pond-ering

By

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Pondering about adding a pond to the landscape? Whether it is a simple pond, a secret fishing hole or a babbling brook, there is something about the sound of water that fascinates. Many people enjoy a small pond with water only. Some add a pump to create sound. Others go further and add fish and plants. For those who want to go a step further and build a larger pond, here are a few suggestions of how to start.

First, choose a location and decide how big of a pond to build and approximately how much money to spend to create and maintain it. A pond can be a wonderful addition to any property for years to come, or it can be a chore.

I first dug my pond near the front door where I could enjoy viewing it at all times. Soon I discovered that my soil would not hold water. So I purchased a plastic liner that holds water even through the hottest summer months. Additionally, I built a water harvesting system to collect rainwater from my roof as well as run-off water from my property.

During the first few years, the pond was plagued with algae. I introduced 20 goldfish, which solved the algae problem. Fish need places to spawn and hide; therefore I added water lilies, pickerel plants, Louisiana Iris and cattails. Not only did the goldfish like it, it was great for people as well. Flowering aquatic plants, different leaf textures and shapes are candy for the soul.

While fish and plants are interesting, I continue to experiment with different types of water features. Eventually, I added a 30' x 10' oval shaped bog filled with pea gravel which acts as a filter on the edge of my pond. I pump 4000 gallons of water each hour from the pond into the pea gravel and back to the pond via a lovely waterfall. In addition, I have discovered that the pea gravel works as a fantastic growing medium because of the rich organic material that is filtered out of the pond.

Those 20 goldfish were very prolific. They soon turned into about 400 goldfish. Then I introduced 10 eight-inch catfish, and they thoroughly enjoyed the goldfish. My family, in turn, feast on fresh catfish dinners every now and then. Abundant wildlife frequents my pond, including deer, raccoon, barred owl and blue heron...and an occasional skunk.

The pond requires maintenance about every 6 months. I check that the pump is working properly and that the filter is not clogged.

So ponder no more! Call the Palo Pinto Agricultural Extension Office at 940-659-2588 and talk with someone who can help you get started.