



# Pond Build I

First you dig a hole. Well, OK.....there *is* a little more to it than that, but not that much more. The following instructions will guide you through a simple and generic construction project suitable for most backyard ponds. Your pond can be as uncomplicated or as elaborate as you choose when using a flexible Pond Liner. We suggest you visit Nelson Water Gardens for ideas and techniques that are well suited to our clay soils and hot, humid environment. We're more than happy to help you design and even build your pond!

## **Design**

Designing the pond is a series of steps. The first step is to dream. Thumbing through books and magazines on gardening will help you envision your ultimate water garden. Next create a portfolio of favorite garden designs and elements. You will discover as you build your portfolio that you tend to choose the same designs and elements over and over again. This will give you a base on which to build the aesthetic portion of your design.

### **Two helpful rules of thumb in design**

1. Gardens come into two very broad categories; formal and natural. If you choose formal, then the garden will fall into straight lines and geometric shapes. A natural garden is comprised of flowing lines and curves. All other elements of the garden should be consistent with a formal or natural layout.
2. Choose a design element whether it be color, form, texture or line and repeat it over and over in the your design. This repetition will give your water garden consistency and establish a theme. For example, creating a white garden—a garden consisting solely of white flowers.

The functional portion of design; where to place the pond, best type of construction material, what type of filter to use, how the site impacts the design are covered in the following construction techniques. Your final design will be a marriage of aesthetics and function, each will influence the other.

## **Site Selection**

1. If at all possible, site your water garden where it can be viewed from inside the home as well as outside.
2. The sunniest site possible is best for a water garden featuring aquatic plants. Sunlight is not as crucial for Koi Ponds.
3. Avoid low areas where rain runoff into the pond brings with it mulch, grass clippings and any chemicals you may have used in your garden. The sudden influx of water into the pond can affect the pH levels in the pond, stressing the fish.
4. Locate all underground utilities (cable, gas, water, electric, phone, etc.) before digging. Call 811 to have all lines marked for free, but allow 72 hours after you call for the lines to be marked before you begin work.
5. Avoid placing the pond under a roof overhang because many roofing materials contain chemicals that are toxic to fish.
6. Avoid placing the pond under a tree but if this is unavoidable try to site the pond on the south side of the tree.

## **Constructing a Liner Pond**

1. It is recommended to do your homework before you get too far along into the project. Check your local codes, ordinances, and/or homeowner's association restrictions to make sure that what you are planning to build and where you are planning to build it will be allowed. If you have a survey of your property, it should show where any utility or maintenance easements are located that you should consider.

1502 Katy Fort Bend Co. Rd. ☞ Katy, Texas 77493

Phone: 281-391-4769 ☞ Fax: 281-391-8626

e-mail: [info@nelsonwatergardens.com](mailto:info@nelsonwatergardens.com)

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2. Lay the pond out first with a hose or rope before digging. View from all angles then go into the house and check out the view from inside. A nudge of the toe will change the pond to your specifications!
3. Start Digging! Using a spirit level, line level or transit check all sides, add soil to the low sides and remove from the high areas. Work carefully, the pond must be level!
4. Add 1 inch of sand to the bottom of the excavation. Remove any protruding tree roots and rocks. In rocky soils line the sides with a cushioning material such as pond underlayment. (Lining the sides is not necessary in the Houston area.)
5. Lay the liner in place and smooth away any wrinkles. Begin filling the lined pond with water. As the pond fills continue smoothing away wrinkles. Leave as much overlap of liner on the sides as possible. A 12" to 18" overhang is recommended.
6. Place all your stones or rocks around the pond. After they have been arranged to your satisfaction, then mortar the stones into place.
7. Clean all the mortar joints with vinegar using a stiff wire brush.
8. Completely clean out the pond, a Shop Vac is helpful in removing all construction debris from the bottom.
9. Refill with water and dechlorinate, we recommend AquaSafe.
10. Add Water Garden Starter to start up the beneficial biological activity in your pond.
11. Stock the pond with plants and a couple of fish. Wait at least a week before adding more fish.

### **Tips**

Build the pond for you. Have fun with it and let your pond reflect your own unique personality. Here are a few additional tips that will guide you in the design process.

1. Keep the **safety** of young children in mind when building a pond. Treat your water garden with the same respect and diligence toward safety as you would a swimming pool.
2. Partially raised ponds tend to look larger. The same size pond will appear to "shrink" when constructed at ground level. Construct ground level ponds slightly larger to compensate for this optical illusion.
3. Building a water garden is like building a deck, once you are finished you'll wish you'd made it bigger!
4. Keep it simple; build the pond with a broad expanse of surface area. Islands, channels, peninsulas and other features look great on paper but rarely translate to the garden, except in ponds of great size. These types of features also create dead water areas. They are also much more difficult for the novice to install.
5. Not one single guest will be able to resist walking right up to the pond edge, make it accessible and stable.
6. Maintenance will be easier if you construct the pond so that filters, pumps and fountains are easily accessible.
7. Decorative tiles look great in a swimming pool, but won't work in the pond. All ponds develop a natural (and beneficial) patina of mossy algae which coat the sides and bottom of the pond.

**Above all take the time to enjoy the process as well as the finished project!**