

Adding a Frog Pond to Your Landscape

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A great addition to any garden is a Frog Pond! Frogs and tadpoles are enjoyable to watch and they eat their weight in insects and pests. Frog ponds are not difficult to build. The ideal spot for a frog pond is a partly shady area. Four by five feet is a good workable size. Use a rope or hose to determine the shape you like. Mark the outline on the ground with spray paint. Now you are ready to dig. Moist soil is relatively soft. You can use sprinklers a few days prior to digging.

There should be three levels in a Frog Pond: a 3 foot deep area for frogs to hibernate, side shelves for emerging water plants and as a hiding place for tadpoles, and last, a sloped side to facilitate an easy exit from the pond. Begin digging at the deep center of the pond and then move out to the sides so you can form the sloped area and the shelves. The plant shelves should be a foot wide and about 9 inches under the water. Use one-gallon black plastic plant containers on these ledges. The exit slope is 30 degrees and 2 feet wide and begins 5 inches underwater.

Level your pond edges with a carpenter's level and a straight board. Add dirt as needed. Remove sharp rocks before you tamp down and smooth the pond bed. Measure the hole and buy a generous liner that is at least 1 foot longer than the pond. A sunny day makes the liner flexible and easier to install. Lay a base of wet sand 2 inches deep on the pond bed to protect the liner from punctures. Then put the liner in the hole. Toss 3 inches of mud and some rocks and dead leaves in the pond. This simulates a natural bottom frogs will love. Use a water hose to fill the pond. The water weight settles and shapes the liner. Trim the liner to 1 foot beyond the pond edge. A typical liner last 12 years, but may need repair so save the trimmings. Bury the liner edges under 6 inches of dirt and place large flat stones over the buried liner. Let your pond stand for 3 days to allow chlorine to evaporate. You may also need to let water stand in buckets before you top the pond water off. This is important for amphibians. Do not include fish because they eat tadpoles. Some filters and pumps can suck and whirl the tadpoles like a blender.

Add your plants! Drop a few Hardy Water lilies in 1-gallon containers into the deep area. The lily pads will float to the surface. Place the shelf plants in 1-gallon containers. Do not use perlite! Instead, use a mixture of 50/50 mud and coarse sand with pebbles in the containers. Add floating water plants. Plants should cover 60% of the pond to provide shelter and shade. At first you may see an algae bloom. Let it be! When the nutrients in the pond balance, algae will decrease. Algae thrives on light and excessive nutrients. Water plants provide the competition. Tadpoles also eat algae. After you have built the pond, you can let your native frogs, toads, salamanders, and aquatic insects discover it. Have fun!

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is

located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.

Saturday, July 28th, Master Gardeners will present a free three-hour class on “Gardening for Bees and Butterflies”. The class starts at 9:00 a.m. and is held in the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr., in Placerville.

Do you have 1-gallon plant containers to recycle? Master Gardeners will gladly take them at the Master Gardener Office. Call before dropping them off and thank you for the donation.