

Create your own mini-wetland

Bog gardens attract a variety of wildlife into the garden and are relatively simple to create. Free rainwater can also provide almost all the water needed for filling your wetland.



How can you contribute to the massive drive to improve our environment? Whilst national wetlands often cover hundreds of kilometres, creating a wetland, marsh or bog in your own garden is one of the most wildlife-friendly features that you can develop (Fig 1). Your bog or marsh garden should be maintained using rainwater harvesting only if possible, as this will reduce your water consumption drastically.



Fig 1. A mini-wetland will attract a variety of insects, such as this colourful dragonfly, as well as frogs, toads and birds.

Creating a bog garden

A bog garden, mini-wetland or marsh can be created next to an existing pond, which can overflow into it, or it can be created separately. Follow these guidelines when creating your own bog garden:

- Mark out the required shape with string or sand and dig a trench about 1m deep with sloping sides.
- Line the trench with black plastic sheeting or a clay-lining such as bentonite.
- You should place your pond so that it receives run-off rain water and is filled with harvested rainwater only.
- Perhaps install a filter that cleans water as it enters your pond.
- Plant marsh or bog-loving plants (Fig 2) such as the bamboo reed (*Elegia capensis*), dekriet (*Chondropetalum tectorum*), peacock flower (*Dietes bicolor*), arum lily and the wild iris (*Dietes grandiflora*).
- Plant wonderlawn (*Dichondra repens*) or the indigenous daisy lawn (*Phyla nodiflora*) as low ground covers around the wetland perimeter.
- A wildlife pond has a shallow end for frogs and fish to breed in and for birds to come down to the water's edge to drink.
- Place small pebbles and rocks in the bog garden to create a habitat for aquatic insects.

Welcoming wildlife

Aside from a water source, there are many other ways to encourage wildlife into your garden.

- Logs, leaf litter, rocks, compost heaps and stone walls can provide shelter for a range of small animals, such as frogs and lizards.
- Identify plants that are food sources for the creatures you want to attract, like scabiosa and *Hypoestes aristata*, which attract butterflies. Place them adjacent to your pond.
- To attract birds, set aside an exclusion area that is far away from your living areas and blocked off from any pets.
- Provide artificial shelters or food sources, such as a feeding platform where kitchen scraps can be placed.
- Avoid using harmful chemicals in your garden.

Bog gardens will attract a variety of wildlife to your garden. The presence of insects, such as dragonflies, and frogs in your bog garden is a good indication that your pond water is healthy.



Fig 2. Water-loving plants, such as the indigenous arum lily will add a beautiful focal point to your pond.

Where to position a bog garden

- Place your bog garden in a location that receives at least five hours of sunlight a day.
- Don't put the bog garden under large trees. Maintenance will increase as the leaves will need to be removed from the wetland to prevent them from fouling the water as they decompose.
- Find a level spot. The bog garden should be at the lowest part of the garden so all runoff water will collect there.
- Likewise, rainwater from a downspout or from a paved area can be directed towards the bog garden by a 'dry riverbed' consisting of a plastic-lined channel filled with pebbles.

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