How to encourage wildlife to your pond

by Waterside Nursery
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To encourage wildlife to your pond you should use a mix of planting that can cater to the needs of a range of creatures.

Although there are a few things to bear in mind when planting like depth of your shelf areas, there is no shortage of choice when it comes to plants that create a natural habitat for wildlife to thrive.

Whether you’re a complete beginner in planting a new pond or are looking for some extra info on the wildlife in your own pond, this guide should help you find all manner of helpful ideas and there is much more detail in our website Tips and Advice pages.
Step 1

How to be a good host

One of the busiest areas in a garden for wildlife activity is a pond.

The ideal habitat for aquatic creatures would be to put the pond in the most secluded part of your garden - away from over-hanging trees, tarmac areas, patios or fences if possible.

Plant outside the water to create an ‘emergence zone’ for the wildlife’s regular comings and goings.

Linda’s Top Tip

Allow gaps in your fence line at ground level to allow ‘creature corridors’ from your neighbours gardens for small creatures.

This will make it easier for any amphibians and insects nearby to find and safely use your pond. Though not many obstacles tend to get in the way!

To provide amphibians with an easily accessible watering hole, you should have a shallow, sloping edged pond as opposed to a raised or wall edged pond.
To encourage a wide range of visitors aim for a well balanced planting which appeals to any investigating wildlife, whatever the time of year.

1. **Ponds are key in offering places for aquatic species to breed in Spring**
   - Make sure your plants occupy lots of different areas of the pond water as newts, frogs, toads all have different preferences.

2. **Ponds later in the season**
   - Include pond plants that have different types of leaf form – uprights for support or surface cover for protection - each style of plant provides a different function at different stages of creature lifecycles.

3. **To encourage flying insects**
   - Use plants that have different flowering times to gain activity on a regular basis.

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**Linda’s Top Tip**

*We have ready prepared planting schemes in different sizes designed to attract wildlife to choose from should you need a helping hand.*
No plants are wrong for wildlife - it’s just some plant types are preferred by different inhabitants. There is no selection of plants that has to be used as long as you remember all the different depth areas of your water.

Always consider the size of your pond when seeking out plant choices. Many plants have larger and smaller varieties tailored for different pond sizes.

Native plants are obviously a good starting point as it is what generations of wildlife are already accustomed to. However Non-Native plants will provide an extended season of interest and be smaller in growth so are worth including.

Linda’s Top Tip

Some of the British Natives are vigorous in growth and may take over small pond areas. Carefully choose your selection of plants and look at Non Natives too.

Choose:
- Oxygenating plants for deep water
- Rafting plants across the surface in shallow water
- Emergent upright plants from various shelf depths
- Plant cover over the deep water surface for as long as possible
Step 3

What can I expect to see?

**Newts**

When the season starts in early Spring, newts will look for suitable leaves from rafting plants to lay their eggs in. These plants will have small, soft leaves growing near the water surface.

“Ideal due to their small, bendable leaves, simple enough for a newt to manoeuvre and fold over their newly laid eggs”

**Frogs**

Around the same time the newts return to the pond, frogs do too. They return to mate in shallow water areas amongst low plant growth before returning to land leaving clumps of frogspawn behind.

Again, similar to the newts, the frogs will benefit from shallow spreading rafting plants, which will cover an area of the pond and give protection to the tadpoles.

**Linda’s preferred plants**

*Myosotis scorpioides* (Water Forget-me-not)
*Rorippa nasturtium aquaticum* (Fools Water Cress)

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*For smaller ponds*

*Veronica beccabunga* (brooklime) as well as the newt favourites above

*For larger ponds*

*Menyanthes trifoliata* (bog bean)
Step 3

What can I expect to see (continued)?

Toads

Toads can exist in deeper areas of the pond. The female toad will use deep water oxygenating plants or deeper growing plant stems to attach her egg streams to.

Linda’s preferred plants

*Caltha palustris* (Marsh Marigold)
*Ceratophyllum demersum* (Hornwort)

Insect Pollinators

Pond plant flowers appeal to insect pollinators in the same way flowers of plants in your garden borders do.

They attract butterflies, hoverflies, wasps and bees.

Linda’s preferred plants

**Butterflies**
*Lythrum salicaria* (Native pollinator plant)

**Bees**
*Mentha cervina* (non-Native pollinator plant)

**Hoverflies**
*Butomus umbellatus* (Native pollinator plant)

Both Native and non-Native plants can be used, providing the flowers are not double.
Step 3

What can I expect to see (continued)?

Dragonflies and damselflies

Dragonfly larvae grow from eggs deposited beneath the surface of the water. When old enough to leave the pond they climb out of the water using the tall stems or leaves of plants as a ladder.

They will use these taller upright plants again when they come to rest from flying and during their mating rituals. The females also use the flowers of waterlilies to perch on when depositing their eggs into the water after mating.

Linda’s preferred plants

*Butomus umbellatus* *(Flowering rush)*
*Nymphaea* varieties
*Water Iris* varieties

*Butomus umbellatus*  
*Nymphaea*  
*Water Iris*
Step 4

Help the wildlife in Winter

Any rotting plant material should be removed to the compost heap in Autumn.

Don’t remove oxygenating plants in Autumn as you want a good oxygen supply below the ice if the pond freezes over for the creatures that remain in the water.

Provide lots of safe hiding places on land for wildlife to go to for their Winter rest – log piles, unkempt corners of broken vegetation or purpose built bug homes.

Linda’s preferred plants

*Ceratophyllum demersum* (Hornwort)

*Myriophyllum spicatum* (Spiked Milfoil)
Final thought...

Thank you for taking the time to read our ‘How to’ guide on encouraging wildlife to your pond.

We feel there is a great desire for people to try and add water to their garden spaces and help support the wildlife that could visit them there – our aim is to make it as easy as possible.

We at Waterside Nursery hope that you will take the time to read our next guide too. If you have any ideas what you would like as a topic for an ebook please let us know.

Any feedback you can give us will be much appreciated.

Thanks again and happy planting!

Linda & Phil
Waterside Nursery

More about Waterside Nursery

Waterside Nursery is one of the UK’s leading online mail order services for aquatic plants. We are set apart from the rest by offering plants rooted into baskets, ready to be planted in your pond or container.

We have been growing plants in our Nursery in Leicestershire, UK since 1995 and have won 5 Chelsea Gold Medals for Aquatic plants since 2011.

We also offer a wide breadth of products aimed at making ponds exciting and fun including:

- Pond plants
- Waterlilies & surface cover plants
- Oxygenating pond plants
- British native pond plants
- Container ponds
- Planting schemes
- Pond products
- Moist & Bog plants
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