

# Just Add Water



## No Garden Is Complete Without It!

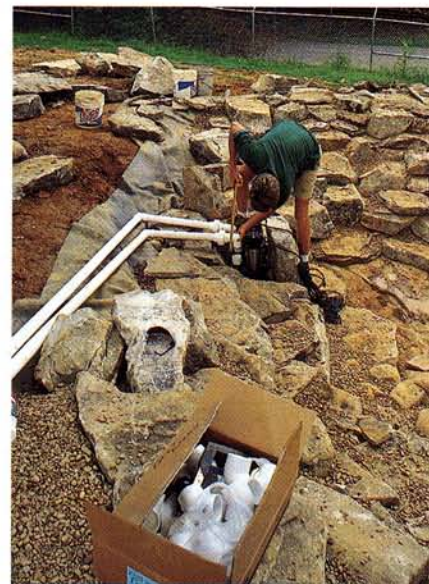
By Garry Menendez, University of Tennessee

**W**hen have you last visited a prominent garden or landscape and failed to encounter a pond, stream, waterfall, fountain or at least a bird-bath? No matter what the size of your yard, you too can experience the calming sensation a water feature provides.

Just imagine yourself kicked back in a shade-dappled hammock on a lazy Sunday afternoon. Only

occasionally you break from your classic novel to reach over and take a sip from a frosty beverage. Suddenly you realize you can't hear the hum of the A/C unit next door. The constant yapping of the neighbor's dogs seems to have diminished (we've got plenty of those, you're welcome to come by and take your pick). The only sound that fills the air is that of the water splashing over moss covered rocks as it returns to your garden pond. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

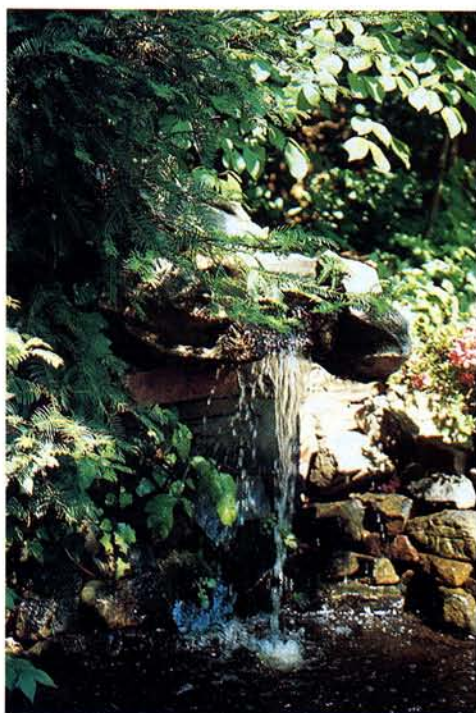
The guts of any garden pond consist of a flexible pond liner, a good pump, plenty of rocks & pea gravel. Plants and fish are optional, but I see them as completing the scene. First, find the spot in your yard where you would get the most benefit from a water feature. Make certain that you have electricity nearby or that an electrician can install a weatherproof GFI (ground fault interrupter) outlet nearby. Some say that you must have a minimum of six hours of



sunlight on your pond. This is true if you're planning on collecting water lilies or other blooming plants. If you don't have this much sun, don't sweat it. You'll also have less algae. Contrary to what may appear to be common sense, avoid placing the pond in the lowest place in the yard. This only invites drainage and runoff problems, like being the recipient of your neighbor's lawn fertilizer after a big rain.

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Digging a hole for the pond involves sweat and if it's hot enough, you can fill your pond at the same time...yuck! The depth of a garden pond should be about 18 to 24 inches if you want fish to survive a "typical" Tennessee winter.



PHOTOS: Garry Menendez







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Another critical step is to excavate a "shelf" (that will be no deeper than about 12 inches when the pond is full) around the perimeter of the pond. This does two things. It will enable you to let the rock that edges the pond step down below water level and thus hide the liner...a must! It also provides a shallow shelf for bog plants, which don't like too much water over their roots. After the hole is dug and the edges are level, line the pond

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with thick layers of wet newspapers to provide a cushion between the earth and liner. Next, finish the pond by installing rock to hide the liner and serve as an edge around the top of the pond. Fill in the voids with pea gravel. The excavated earth from the pond can be used to provide changes in elevation and thus a waterfall. When selecting a liner and pump for your pond, get as much as you can afford. Forty-milimeter-thick butyl rubber liners can be pricey but they'll

last a long time. A pump should circulate about half the pond volume per hour to provide a healthy habitat for plants and fish.

A word of caution: This is the *Reader's Digest Condensed* version of how to install a garden pond. There are plenty of books, TV shows and live seminars (as opposed to dead seminars) that deal with this subject more thoroughly. It is my hope that this little blurb just serves as a spark to ignite your imagination and eventually allow you to "complete" your garden by just adding water. ☼

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