

water features





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JUST ADD WATER

Words: Sandra Batley

From a modest, informal pond to the most elaborate formal fountain, a well-placed water feature creates drama and interest in any style of garden

Captivating to watch, cool to touch and soothing to the ear, water has the power to transform and add that mesmerising appeal to any garden. Whether it's used as the focus in a new garden or to add an exciting, fresh dimension to an existing garden, water offers a unique point of difference to the outdoors.

With so many ways to integrate water into your backyard, you are limited only by your imagination. From simple natural ponds and meandering streams to elaborate features and fountains, water can be used as a design feature in many ways.

To incorporate a water feature into your garden requires a little thought and planning. First, you need to consider what effect you would like to create in your garden using water. For example, do you like the sound of moving, splashing water or the simple reflective qualities of still water? Once you have determined the effect you want to achieve, you can then go about choosing the style of water feature that

will create this effect. Whatever style is used in the garden, it should always complement the surrounding features, not detract from them.

From a design perspective, the shape, size, style and position of your water feature is usually determined by the style of the garden and the architecture of the house. Formal gardens have a strongly geometric layout. To maintain this formality, it would be appropriate to include a water feature with suitably formal elements.

A pond is a perfect choice for a formal garden. Ponds are, in essence, bodies of water framed within geometric shapes; usually square, rectangular or round. Often, they are edged with concrete, paving, stone or bricks to frame them. They can be raised or sunk into the ground with a centrally placed statue or fountain jet to add the finishing touches.

Choose the position of the pond carefully. In large, open, rural settings, ponds can be situated among manicured lawns, with plantings of trees as a backdrop. Within a small urban space, ponds can be a centrepiece in the middle of a patio or paved area. Choose plants to complement the formal framework rather than overcrowd it — simplicity is the key.

To create a more natural, informal style of pond, use irregular, curved shapes. The key is to blend it into its surroundings. Soften the outside using plants and pebbles. Edge with natural stone, rocks and boulders and situate it in among the garden. This style suits an oriental design or naturalistic setting. Decks and platforms can be cleverly →

1. A nice blend of timber and split stone pieces has been used to construct this rustic-style water feature. Photography by Tim Friday, *Take it Outside*.

2. A stainless-steel water weir has been incorporated into a garden wall, with the water falling into a shallow ornamental pond below. Photography by Tim Friday, *Take it Outside*.



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Water features and swimming pools

If you have a swimming pool but also want a water feature, why not integrate the two. Incorporating a water feature into a pool essentially gives you the best of both worlds. And, better still, the greatest advantage of integrating a water feature into a pool is it uses the same treated water as the pool and is therefore very low maintenance.

Rock waterfalls

Rocks, from artificial ones to huge natural boulders, can be used to build around and nestle alongside a swimming pool, creating a dramatic cascading waterfall effect. These make a spectacular addition to an informal-style pool. However, to create an authentic look and avoid any costly mistakes, it's a good idea to employ a landscape contractor experienced in this type of water feature work to get a really successful result.

Sheer-descent waterfalls

These provide a clear arc or sheet of water into the swimming pool. A captivating wide arrange of effects can be created, anything from a stylish, silent, glass-like sheet of water to a rushing spring effect. The mechanism used to produce a sheer-descent can be integrated into the side of the pool itself or designed to descend into the pool from a purpose-built wall. This suits a modern or contemporary-style home and garden.

Deck and wall jets

Installed in the pool coping, deck jets project steady streams of water in an arc into the pool. The flow and projection angle can be adjusted to create different effects. They can be partially illuminated with button lights mounted in the pool coping adjacent to the jet outlet. Wall jets are similar products but are designed to be wall-mounted. They have square plastic cover plates.

designed around, and extend over, part of a pond, creating a pleasant area to sit and view the water or to provide access around it.

Fish and aquatic plants can also be introduced to the pond — goldfish make an excellent addition. Both will require regular maintenance if the pond is to be kept looking its best.

Ponds are just one of many ways in which water can be introduced into the garden. Small courtyards, entranceways and corners of the garden can easily be transformed with the addition of a small water feature. Consider overflowing urns, pots or bamboo spouts. Or, for larger spaces, why not opt for rills, streams, waterfalls or ornamental lakes? If you're feeling creative,

3. A large stone bowl makes a simple yet effective water feature. Here, water lilies and candles have been added to give it that special touch in the garden. Photography by Kirsten Sach Landscape Design.

4. A carefully chosen and placed piece of rock is cleverly transformed into a natural-looking water feature. Photography by Tim Friday, Take it Outside.

various objects can be used to hold water, such as halved wooden barrels, pots and concrete troughs, making for unique water feature pieces.

There are also self-contained ornaments that require no pool to stand in. Often, they are designed with their own reservoir and pump. These water features suit sheltered positions such as patios, conservatories and balcony gardens. They come in various styles to suit a number of personal tastes and outdoor environments.

Lighting can bring a garden to life at night and, when combined with water, can create a whole new dimension to the space. Water takes on a new perspective with the right lighting. There are two methods of highlighting water in the garden: from above the water or below it.

Light can be directed down onto the water's surface when hidden in trees or fixed to buildings, which will bring the pool out of the darkness. When used below the water surface, you can highlight fountains or other features in the water and create a strong focal point at night.

Whatever the form of the water feature, the sight and sound of water will always draw your attention to it and bring life and energy to your outdoor space. ■



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