

WILD YOUR SPACE

Wild your school
Rewild your children

Small Ponds

There is much conflicting advice on the ideal size for a pond, but for schools (with limited budgets, and legitimate safety concerns) we are happy to embrace the idea that smaller is better – as indeed it may well be. All life needs water, and by introducing a small pond (or several small ponds) to your garden or playground you will certainly attract a great number of species that you, and your children, would not see otherwise. Putting it simply – ponds are magnets for wildlife, and as such can be another key part of your nature restoration goals.



Ponds were once a much more significant and common feature on our traditional landscape, and by doing your bit to reestablish this essential natural component you will be helping your local natural environment more than you can imagine.

From a learning point of view – ponds represent an ideal opportunity to demonstrate, to children, the fundamentals of ecology.

Funding and Further Assistance

Don't forget our **Wild Your Space Microgrant**, which is unique to the Scottish Borders and which has already helped numerous local schools to make their playgrounds more wildlife (and child) friendly.

www.brightgreennature.org/microgrant

This link also includes our list of native plants. And always remember that the Bright Green Nature team are available for advice and assistance as and when required.

To quote Chris Packham –

"Here is a community of plants and animals that exist in dynamic harmony. They come, they go, they grow old or kill each other and it all works. It's balanced, it's functional, it's perfect."

www.brightgreennature.org/wildyourspace

Top Tips...

- Shallow ponds are often the most productive for attracting wildlife.
- Carefully consider the best location – some sunlight is important, away from trees if possible, sheltered from wind, good access from all sides but in a quiet spot.
- Be as far as possible from anywhere that weedkillers or pesticides may be used.
- Be sure to risk assess as required.
- Whilst pond liners and pre-fabricated shapes are available (at a cost) we'd always recommend recycling something else that could do the job if possible – old tubs, sinks, sandpits, etc.
- If possible, fill with rainwater. If you do use tap water, you should allow it to settle outdoors for a few days before putting it into your pond.
- Use stones, sticks and plants to provide easy gentle sloping access (or escape routes) for a whole variety of creatures. These can also work as perches and rest areas.
- Your children may want fish, but it's a no! Putting it simply – fish will eat everything else.
- Your inhabitants will require some shade. This can be provided by nearby plants and by plants and other objects in or around the pond.
- There are several categories of plants that most ponds require to function well – underwater oxygenating plants, floating (anchored or unanchored) and marsh plants for the edges. Always use only native plants.
- Many plants will mysteriously find their way to a new pond. If you get impatient ask the parents if anyone has a pond and a few spare plants (pond plants grow prolifically in the warmer months), or source from a local garden centre. Just be careful not to introduce diseases from other places.
- If you have problems with the water going green, you may need to introduce Daphnia (water fleas).
- Turf round the edges and ensure there are a variety of other native plants, shrubs etc, nearby. Wildlife move around much better if there are useable shelters and natural wild routes linking different features – i.e. between a pond and a hedge.

Finally – you may need a little patience! Even by doing nothing, plants and invertebrates will quickly find their way to any new water feature. However it could be a year or two before your pond becomes a perfect example of nutrient equilibrium that you envisage. But, it will happen. And once it does, you may be rewarded with dragonflies, pond snails, newts, frogs, toads, and of course pond skaters, great diving beetles and much more.

Weblinks

This link to the Wildlife Trusts shows just how quick and easy it can be - www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-mini-pond

Similarly this short RSPB video explains the process and the benefits - www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/making-a-minipond

And here the Natural History Museum provide a bit more details - <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-small-wildlife-pond.html>

And of course – you can ask the Bright Green Nature team for advice and assistance at any point, for building, maintenance, or even lesson plans (see below).

Learning Opportunities and Identification



Ponds give children a window into another world. And we want them to understand how this fascinating alien environment functions, and for them to be able to identify the creatures that live there. By developing an understanding of how interconnected all these plants and animals are within both the pond and the wider ecological landscape, they will begin to appreciate how species depend on each other, whilst fostering a greater appreciation for nature in general.

This **Wetlands for Life** link shows many of the most popular species that may start to appear -

www.wwt.org.uk/discover-wetlands/blog/pond-life-a-quick-id-guide-to-the-weird-and-wonderful-wildlife-beneath

There are many other websites and books available (for all ages) as you would expect.

Additionally, you can find numerous useful free identification sheets, for downloading and printing, online - such as this one from **tes** -

www.tes.com/teaching-resource/a4-pond-life-identification-sheet-12947282

You could create your own sheet, or use the one that we made...

On the following page you will see a sheet which we compiled for a local Borders Primary School to assist them with basic identification when they were planning their new pond.

This was quick and easy, and by initially not providing the individual species names it kept them guessing and thinking.

This particular sheet (which you are welcome to print and use) shows many of the popular visitors that may appear in a new pond, such as yours. **They are...**

- Water Snail
- Pond Skater
- Water Boatman
- Water Spider
- Water Scorpion
- Fresh Water Shrimp
- Great Diving Beetle
- Caddis Fly Larvae
- Water Louse

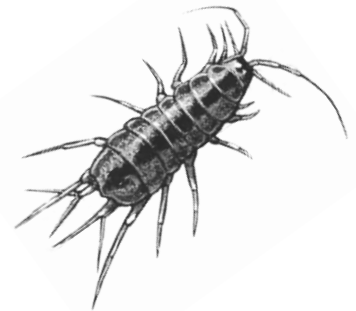
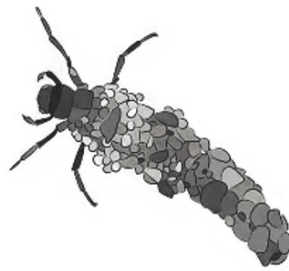
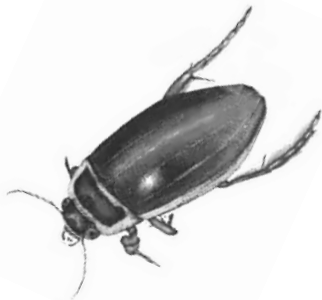
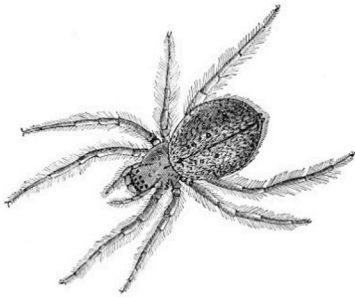
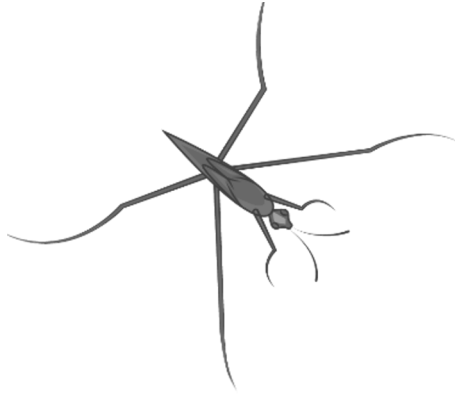
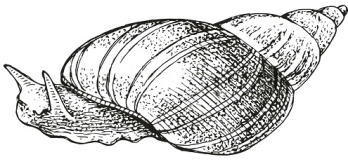


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Primary School

What might come to live in our new pond?



As well as plants, frogs and MUCH more...