

Build a Native Frog Pond



Above: Striped Marsh Frog, like most frogs, call after heavy rains to attract a mate. Photo: Jenny Thynne. Below right: Motorbike Frogs sounds amazingly like a motorbike. Photo: R. Vandelft.



Frog ponds can come in all shapes and sizes. You can even leave out an old plastic kiddie pool or old bath. Let it fill with rainwater and add native plants and rocks. Photo: John Tann.



Frog spawn. Photo: Pip Wilson.

A pond creates a home for frogs and adds a lovely water feature in the garden for you to feast your eyes on. You can design your own, in a few simple steps.



Location

- Build your pond away from existing large trees. This avoids problems with roots and with leaves falling in.
- Build your pond away from houses, including neighbours, as frogs can get noisy when calling.
- Choose a site that's shady for about three quarters of the day. You don't want your pond to overheat in summer. Balance is the key. The right dose of sunshine helps algae to grow, feeding hungry tadpoles. Too much sun and algae, however, can reduce water quality.
- Try to make the pond as wide as possible, and around 30 cm deep.

This is suitable for small aquatic animals. Your local council can advise you on the maximum depth you are allowed, with and without a fence.

- Try to build your pond in an area where water naturally collects. For example, a depression, or under a roof-top pipe where rain drips.

Design Features

- Before digging, consider water supply and drainage as well as electricity supply for lights, pumps and filters.
- Build an overflow area (a place below the pond height). This is to control where the water overflows in case of heavy rain.

- Screen your pond to make sure no plants, snails, frogs or eggs can leak out. This keeps your fish in the pond and protects your local waterways from any potentially harmful escapees (especially important if you have non-native fish).
- Include gently sloping sides to allow frogs to get in and out of the pond easily.
- Make a ramp to help frogs with slippery feet climb out easily. Prop a log or a few rocks over the pond's edge.



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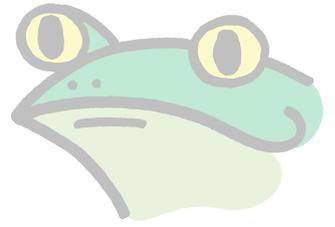
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Preparation

- If you use a plastic pond liner, make sure it's tough and not easily punctured. Plastic pond liners can be cheaper and easier to install than concrete ponds.
- Rinse your new plastic pond before you install it as frogs are sensitive to chemicals.
- If you choose a concrete pond you need to "cure" it with a combination of filling, scrubbing and painting with vinegar as well as several water changes.
- Line the base of the pond with gravel or washed sand.
- If you fill your pond with tap water remember to allow time for the chlorine in the water to dissipate (at least 5 days) or use a chlorine neutraliser from a pet shop.
- Install your filters, fountains or waterfalls first and ensure everything is working as you intended it to.
- Once you're ready, add your plants and let them settle in for at least a week. Remove any obviously dead leaves as they will pollute the water.
- Add native fish (if you like).



Plants

- Native plant and water garden nurseries, and some pet shops, will have a range of natives for planting in and around your pond so that frogs and tadpoles have somewhere to shelter.
- Reeds and sedges are ideal for the shallows of your pond. They look good, keep the water clean and provide shelter for fish and frogs, and food for tadpoles. If locally native, try out nardoo, native water lily and water ribbon.
- Keep your plants in containers for easy maintenance and to protect your plants.
- Containers with emergent plants can get top heavy. Secure them with bricks.
- Plants local native reeds, sedges, grasses, shrubs and trees of differing heights around your pond for shade and protection. If local, try Kangaroo Grass, Swamp Banksia, Saw-Leafed Sedge and Native Ginger.
- Contact your nursery or council to find out what plants are locally native.



Around the Pond

- Place rocks, logs, leaf litter, bark and upturned flower pots around the pond. Frogs will use these to hide under from predators and to keep cool during the day.
- Create wet, boggy areas around the pond by watering the ground or mulching it. Newly morphed frogs have better chances of surviving in a place with lots of moisture.
- Place loose, sandy soil in these boggy areas. Frogs use these as stepping stones when moving to different habitats.
- Install a solar powered light to attract insects for frogs to munch on.

Maintenance

- Clean filters regularly.
- Top up the pond with the garden hose if it needs it, but don't add more than 10-20% at any one time.
- Scoop out a little dead plant material—it makes great compost. Don't scoop out too much though, as tadpoles eat algae growing in ponds.



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