Adding a Pond Waterfall

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

How to Add a Pond Waterfall

Tips for a successful backyard water feature

Are you considering a waterfall or stream in your backyard, but don't know where to start? Creating a plan and having the right equipment goes a long way toward saving you time and money. Water features quickly become the focal point of any pond, and their benefits continue to grow. Moving water discourages mosquitoes, which love to breed in stagnant pools, and the churning crash of water over rocks breathes vital oxygen into your water garden on those hot summer afternoons.

Fortunately, with innovations like cleverly-disguised waterfall filters that remove dangerous ammonia and nitrite to lightweight pre-built rock facades that take the backache out of building cascades and streams, adding a water feature to your pond is easier than ever.

Here are a few tips to remember as you plan your project:

■ Structure

You'll need to decide whether to raise the grade of your waterfall with dirt or rocks, as well as how tall and wide you desire it to be. Stake out the area and measure to determine the square footage. It's best to figure how much material you'll need for the actual waterfall by dry stacking it at the rock yard. Bring your measurements with you to make sure you have enough rock to fill the area created.

■ Liner

You'll need a piece of liner that is at least 2 feet wider on both sides than the "wet" area you have planned, and a foot longer than the height. It's always safe to get more liner than you need, because if there's any way water can get out, it will.

EPDM Liners

■ The Proper Waterfall Pump

To pick the right waterfall pump, measure the height of the waterfall drop and the required flow rate in gallons per hour (gph).

Determine head height by measuring the distance between where the pump will be resting and the highest point of waterfall. If your pump is at the bottom of a 2 ft deep pond and the top of the waterfall is 4 ft high, then your total head height is 6 ft.

An average waterfall, somewhere between a crash and a trickle, requires a flow rate of 100 gph per inch of waterfall or stream width. A waterfall that is 5 inches wide will need to pump with a flow rate of 500 gph.

Therefore, a waterfall that is 5 inches wide at a total height of 6 ft, will need a waterfall

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pump rated at 500 gph at 6 ft of head height. Refer to the manufacturer's pump charts to find the perfect pond pump for your new waterfall.

Waterfall & filtration unit

Lastly, when building a waterfall, make sure to grade any flat areas slightly tilting toward the pond for proper drainage, and of course take your time - it's a work of art in progress.

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