

MaumMag®

Maumelle Magazine

*“I always wanted
to be a firefighter.”*

*Maumelle Fire Chief
George Glenn*

January, February, March 2009 - Volume 3, Issue 3

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Presort
Standard
U.S. Postage Paid
N. Little Rock, AR
Permit No. 1009

Reflections on Ponds, Ornamental Water Gardens, & Moving Water Features

By Michael Smith

Ponds, ornamental water gardens, and moving water features allow us to experience a part of nature right in our own back yards. Many people dream of having some type of water feature at their home or place of business, but they are unsure about which one is most appropriate for them. Some people fear the upkeep and maintenance required, while others are scared away by common myths. By informing yourself about the different options available, you can choose the water element that is most appropriate for your landscape and your individual circumstances, while avoiding common pitfalls that can lead to unnecessary problems down the road.


There are a myriad of benefits to having a pond or water feature in your yard. Moving water elements provide a soothing auditory dimension to our green areas and they impart a sense of well-being to those who encounter them. In addition to reducing the stress, anxiety, and high blood pressure of their owners, water elements

create an inviting area for people to spend leisure hours with friends and family. Ponds and water gardens also attract local wildlife such as dragonflies, butterflies, and songbirds by providing a beneficial area that is welcoming to them as a habitat. Moreover, water features of all varieties also tend to make homes more attractive to potential buyers because they raise the perceived value of a home, allowing homeowners to get higher asking prices, making them a worthwhile investment.

Ponds make a wonderful addition to a backyard or garden. For people wanting to keep koi or goldfish, this is the appropriate option. Keeping fish is typically the intent of a person installing a true pond, and the fish generally serve as the focal point of this type of water feature.

Ponds can range from around 250 gallons to several thousand gallons in volume, and size does matter if you intend to keep koi, a popular variety of carp that can grow to a few feet in length. A minimum size of 1000

Michael Smith is a co-owner of North-Side Aquatics (www.nsaquatics.com), located on Counts Massie Rd. in Mauldelle. He specializes in ponds, water gardens, and freshwater planted aquariums. He welcomes anyone with questions to stop in for a chat.



Rafini Photography

gallons is recommended for keeping koi. A pond that houses goldfish may be smaller, but small pond owners should beware of overstocking as some species of goldfish can become quite large.

Depth is also of great importance if fish are being kept in the pond. During the winter months coldwater fish such as koi and goldfish will hibernate, but the pond must be deep enough that it cannot freeze solid. In Arkansas, a depth of 2-4 feet is generally sufficient for this purpose, but the required depth varies depending on the size of the pond. The larger the pond is in volume, the slower the temperature is to change; thus, larger volume ponds may be shallower than smaller volume ponds.

For some people, an **ornamental water garden** is a better option than a full-fledged pond. While some water gardens can be very elaborate and

quite large, they can be scaled easily to fit size and budget requirements. Most ornamental water gardens are comprised of a small to moderately sized pool of water that is adjoined by a series of eye-catching waterfalls, streams, and planted areas known as bog filters. While these adjoining features are also frequently found with full-scale ponds, they do not tend to be the central focal point like they are in an ornamental water garden. People who have small water gardens may opt to have a few of the smaller species of goldfish but should typically avoid keeping koi.

Another way to add water to the landscape is through a **moving water feature**. Water features come in many shapes and styles and may be integrated into a landscape that has an existing pond or water garden, or they may stand alone. Moving water features are an ideal solution for people who are very limited on space. When water features are mentioned people typically think of traditional water fountains. While these time honored enhancements to our gardens are always a welcome addition, there are many new exciting ways to add moving water to our gardens.

Newer moving water features include disappearing, or "pondless", waterfalls, fountains, and streams. Water cascades down a stream, over rocks, or out of a large piece of pottery and appears to disappear into rocks or gravel on the ground. An underground basin then catches the water and houses a pump that returns the water to the top of the water feature. These types of water features are ideal for people who wish to add water into their landscape, but do not want to worry about unattended pets

or toddlers in their vicinity. Since the only water that is exposed is only an inch or two deep, they are safe to put in any area, even the front yard.

When properly designed with good filtration and circulation, ponds and water gardens require little maintenance because they are made to replicate a self-maintaining ecosystem. While no pond is maintenance-free, good design combined with practices of not overfeeding or overstocking the pond make pond management very simple.

Utilizing bog filters can greatly improve water quality and reduce maintenance in a pond or water garden. Bog filters are raised areas on the edge of a pond that are full of gravel and are heavily planted. They filter the water naturally by catching floating particles to clear up the water and by consuming the Nitrogen-based waste produced by the fish and uneaten food. These filters look astounding, and polish the water crystal clear. Because the plants feed from the excess nutrients in the water, they will also help control algae growth. The best part about bog filters is that you can use them to retro-fit existing ponds that are poorly

Disappearing Fountain



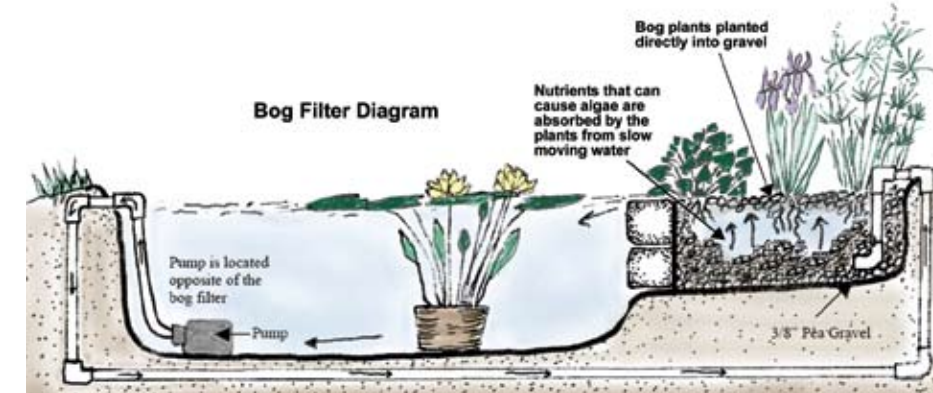
Disappearing Fountain



Pondless Waterfall



Pondless Waterfall Diagram

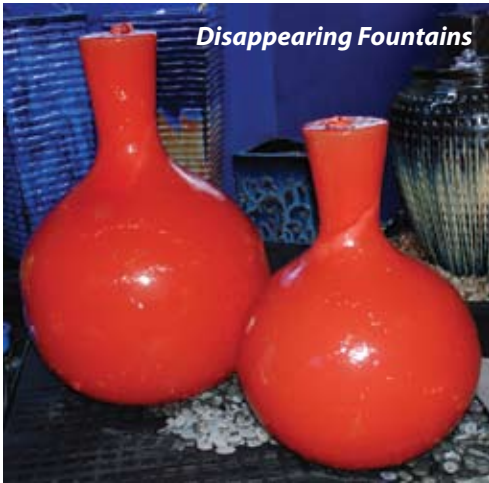


filtered. Maintenance for pondless or disappearing water features is virtually non-existent. Outside of clearing away a few leaves here and there and adding pet friendly algicides on occasion, there is almost no work to be done. These water features can be fitted with automatic top-off mechanisms that keep them full of water so there is no refilling to be done.

COUNTERING MYTHS

The most common myth about ponds and water features is that they produce mosquitoes. It is a fact that mosquitoes need still water that is oxygen deprived to reproduce. A properly designed pond or water feature should have good water flow and high oxygenation which prevents mosquito eggs from surviving. If you already have a pond and it does not have good flow in some areas, there is a very simple remedy – the mosquito fish. Just stop by your local aquarium store and ask for some of these

Continued on Page 20



fish. They are quite inexpensive and can consume a tremendous number of mosquito larvae.

The second most common myth is that ponds are messy and require constant cleaning. Ponds that have good circulation and a good skimmer are very clean because leaves and other surface waste are quickly transported to a net that can be emptied periodically. For existing ponds that have a lot of built up debris, there are bacterial additives that help to break down these wastes. Be sure you have good filtration to remove the broken down waste, as it can be harmful to fish.

Consider adding on a bog filter if your current filtration system is insufficient.

One other myth is that tears in pond liner are an expected occasional inconvenience. If you use the correct type of pond liner over a sandbed or special pond underlayment, pond liner tears are almost unheard of. The correct type of pond liner is a 45 mil EPDM rubber liner which is far more durable than thinner and more brittle vinyl liners. To ensure that you are getting the right type of liner, buy it from a store that specializes in ponds and water gardens.

The key factors to finding the right addition to your outdoor area are understanding the requirements of each type of water element and ensuring that what is chosen is of good quality, and is designed and installed correctly. By taking the time to examine your options and by speaking with a pond or water garden professional, you can make sure that you are on the path to success with the new water element in your garden. ❀

Gateway Self Storage

**Individual Door Alarms • Climate Controlled
Resident Manager • Propane Refills
Computerized Gate Access
Sizes: 5x5 to 12x45
Moving and Storage Supplies
Commercial Deliveries
24-Hour Access Available**

**FREE*
LOCK**

**FREE*
MOVING
TRUCK**

* Call Store
For Details

758-STOR (7867)

**7101 Vestal Court
Off Maumelle Blvd.
(1/4 mile west of I-430)**



**PROPANE
REFILLS**

