

A photograph of a pond with purple water lilies and tall, thin plants in the foreground. The text "Making a splash" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Making a splash

You don't need massive pond. This one in Sussex has a fantastic water feature.



*From a miniature fountain to a pond complete with lily pads and wildlife, a water feature will bring a touch of magic to your garden*

There is something magical about a water feature. Whether it's the twinkling of a fountain as it catches the sunlight and dances in your ears or the silent serenity of a lily pond, water adds life to a garden that is both enchanting and peaceful. And although the mention of fountains conjures up images of grand palatial gardens, there is a water feature for every situation – even a modest apartment balcony. The sound of moving water can soothe away the cares of an exhausting day and drown out unwanted distractions – from your neighbour's screaming children to the sound of the four-lane motorway a few hundred metres away.

The most important thing to bear in mind when you're choosing a water feature is your own personal taste – one person's charming is another person's irretrievably naff, so it is important to follow your heart. And there's plenty to choose from out there, so once you've got a good idea about what size feature will fit comfortably into your plot and whether you want to go for a traditional or more contemporary style, you can shop around until you find whatever feature suits you and your garden best.

Whether it's a classical masterpiece or a cutting-edge contemporary design, a fountain can add an almost fairytale aspect to a garden. Fountains can range from simple arrangements of bubbling pebbles that can be bought in kit form from garden centres and installed in a weekend, to major features like wall fountains that will form the centrepiece of your garden. Water and electricity are a lethal combination, so large features will almost certainly have to be fitted by an expert. Special armoured cables will be needed to supply power via a residual current device, which cuts out at any electrical failure and will have to be installed by a qualified electrician.

Gaining in popularity are self-contained wall fountains that circulate a small amount of water via a tiny pump. They are a great idea if you have children, as even water in a shallow pond can be extremely dangerous. Wall fountains come in all manner of styles and are relatively easy to install, needing only to be fixed firmly to a wall and then connected to a safe power source. Hide any cables with trellis or climbing plants, making sure there is no danger of them coming into contact with water. There are also similar features that have a stand-alone pedestal if your wall is not strong enough to take the weight.

Any water feature will usually be pretty heavy, most being made in stone, real or reconstituted, marble or metals such as copper and lead, so it might take a bit of manpower getting it in to the right spot in your garden. But they are getting lighter, with fibreglass, resin and even plastic versions becoming more popular. These can look really stylish and are a good option if you don't have a strong supporting wall or are just looking for easier installation.

Most larger garden centres or DIY stores will stock dozens of fabulous water feature ideas – from contemporary angular stone and metal designs to traditional rococo fantasies. For some idea of the wide range available, visit [www.fountainsandwaterfeatures.co.uk](http://www.fountainsandwaterfeatures.co.uk), but if you're in the mood for something truly different there are some wonderful designers who have brought a truly modern feel to this most classic of concepts. Humphrey Bowden ([www.humphreybowden.com](http://www.humphreybowden.com)), for example, makes extraordinary copper conceits based on tree and plant shapes. The slender stems of his designs work particularly well in the lush setting of a heavily planted jungle-style garden, their delicate beauty something to be cherished as heirlooms. ▶

Different sized brass bowls work well together to create an interesting and individual flowing fountain





## Charlie recommends ...

... By putting a pond in your garden you will attract so much wildlife.



Because all wildlife needs water, you will get dragonflies, birds, frogs, the whole lot.

## Fluid facts

- If you're having electricity installed for a fountain, ask for a couple of extra waterproof sockets so you can have lighting too.
- Make new stone features look as though they've always been there by painting them with a layer of live yoghurt – this encourages lichens and mosses to grow.
- If you live in a hard-water area, use boiled water in small fountains to limit limescale.
- Don't site a water feature under trees unless you're prepared to clear dead leaves from it on a regular basis.
- Having a party? Fill large glass bowls with water and float candles and blossoms across them for instant drama.
- Don't forget the humble birdbath – a simple way to bring water into your garden that will bring wildlife to your door. Site it near a window so you can enjoy watching the birds splashing around.
- Tired geometric pools in the Moorish style will bring a touch of the Mediterranean to your garden. They particularly suit courtyard-style gardens.



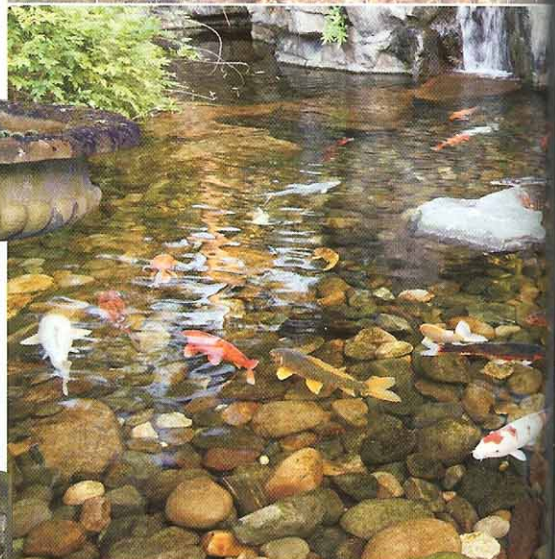
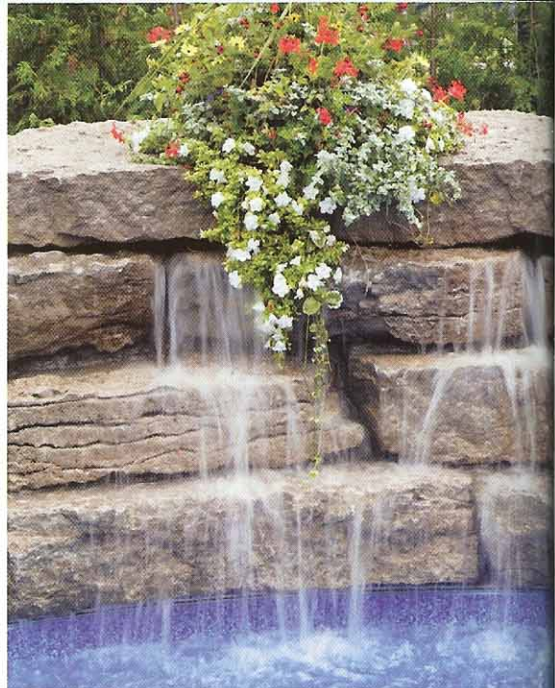
Also at the cutting-edge of fountain design is Louisa Merry Henrikson ([www.lmhceramics.com](http://www.lmhceramics.com)), whose funky chickens and elegant ceramic peacocks add a touch of glamour to a modern setting. More traditional firms (try [www.architectural-heritage.co.uk](http://www.architectural-heritage.co.uk) or [www.wilstone.com](http://www.wilstone.com)) will supply you with either an original antique fountain or a stunning reproduction if the budget doesn't quite stretch.

If you have the space, a pond, with or without a fountain, is a fabulous centrepiece. A modern angular design is most suited to a contemporary setting, or a pond that is lushly concealed around the edges, surrounded by reeds, irises and bulrushes makes for a fabulous country cottage look. The latter is best for wildlife, encouraging frogs and all manner of small creatures and birds into your garden. Fish like to have cool places to hide and a little movement in the water, so a small pump will help keep them happy and

healthy, though beware of predators – from the family cat to the neighbourhood heron.

If you're a keen gardener ponds are well worth the maintenance, however, there are alternatives that will give a more instant effect, as well as being cheaper. A simple, deep bowl planted with a single water lily will bring an exotic touch to even the tiniest balcony. Plants like still water, so no plumbing is required, and lotus blossoms are stunning. If you like the oriental look, a simple half-barrel with water bubbling over some pebbles complete with an aquatic plant and a classic bamboo pipe in the Japanese shishi-odoshi (deer scarer) style will add instant tranquility to your plot.

If you're worried about the amount of power you'd be using for a fountain, choose the eco option. Solar-powered fountains only work when the sun is shining – but that's likely to be when you will spend most time in the garden. ☀



## waterworks

For an added slice of history opt for a Cretan-inspired water feature. Pots and Piethoi ([www.potsandpiethoi.com](http://www.potsandpiethoi.com)) are specialists in producing Cretan terracotta pots using traditional styles and methods. From antiques to brand new, these water features will withstand the challenges of a typical British winter and add beauty to your garden all year round.

