

Garden Clippings

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 104

Wildlife for Ponds

Wildlife will help create a more natural and beautiful atmosphere for any pond. All it takes is a little know-how and determination.

Insects

You will find insects in and around your pond whether you want them or not; this is not always a bad thing.

Insects such as the dragonfly and damselfly are predators and can help control mosquito and fly populations in the summer months. Some insects also lay eggs and appear in larval form in the water, providing a great snack for fish.

To attract insects, place an abundance of plants and flowers in and around your pond. Doing this will create hiding and breeding space for insects. Also, make sure your water is kept circulating to help control mosquito populations.

Snails

The three most common snails for ponds are the ramshorn snail, the trapdoor snail and the great pond snail. Snails are definitely beneficial to a pond's health as they help keep the bottom clean by feeding on leftover fish foods, algae and organic matter.

However, snails can damage aquatic plants if they are in excessive numbers. The general rule for stocking snails is one snail per square foot of pond surface. Keep track of snail numbers in your pond, and control breeding by removing excess eggs from the undersides of leaves.

Fish

A popular choice for ponds is koi, a colourful variety of common carp. Koi are cold hardy

and can be kept over winter if your pond is deeper than 4½ feet. Koi can live as long as 40 years if they are kept healthy and their environment is maintained well.

When stocking your pond with fish, make sure that the species you have chosen can live with each other; also make sure they are relatively the same size and require the same environmental conditions. A general rule for stocking fish is 1 to 1½ inches of fish per square foot of pond surface.

Turtles

Turtles can be a great investment in a pond. The most common turtles are the red-eared slider and the painted turtle.

Before placing turtles in your pond, you will need to make sure there is fencing (or your pond is lifted) to prevent the turtle from leaving, as well as to keep prey out. The turtle will also need a place to sun itself during the day. One or two turtles for the average backyard pond are suggested.

Keep the turtle well fed and happy in the pond, or it may start to eat your fish and plants. Only turtles native to the area can be kept in the pond over winter; and only if your pond meets some strict requirements (although sliders, native to the southern US, have survived Niagara winters). Taking the turtles inside for the winter is a safer option.

When established correctly, wildlife will create a complete living ecosystem for you to enjoy for a long time.

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