

ESSEX LIFE

THE COUNTY'S FAVOURITE MONTHLY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE SINCE 1952

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GARDEN DESIGN DIRT

Leigh-on-Sea-based **Katrina Kieffer-Wells** of Earth Designs shares her garden expertise



A raised pond is perfect for keeping koi



This rill provides a central focal point and travels down the length of the garden

PHOTO: ANNAMARIE TOTT

Water in the garden

Water features are a must addition to many designer gardens. The sight and sound of water can have a positive effect on our mental health. There are a wealth of styles and options that can energise the air or give added impact. The sound can help mask road traffic or other ambient noise.

WHAT'S THE STYLE?

Whatever your space, lifestyle, family unit, and budget there is a water feature for you. It can also work as a mirror, or a humidifier. Water in a garden can range from a large swimming pool to wildlife ponds to a narrower garden rill or a tiny bubble fountain. They can be shop-bought or something that you build yourself. The style can be formal, naturalistic or ultra-modern, using a wide variety of materials. Consider using rendered block, bricks, railway sleepers, metal troughs or buckets. Consideration for all water features needs to be given to children, pets, and wildlife. Think about the time you want to spend on maintenance, and whether you want to encourage wildlife into the space.

WORKING IT INTO YOUR OVERALL DESIGN?

A water feature needs to be carefully planned within the overall design of the garden and not inserted as an afterthought. Many people decide they would like a water fountain or a pond and rush out to their local garden centre to buy the feature or equipment, without giving any real forethought to the positioning of the water feature in a garden. If it is to be visible from the house, consider whether it needs a vertical element, such as a water blade or spout. Creating a natural water feature can be very difficult to make it fit naturally with its surroundings. Many can end up looking incongruous and out of place. Try to place water features within clear view of the house, to act as a garden focal points, or near outside seating or dining areas to aid relaxation. Walkways across water always create drama and excitement as well as a sense of journey within a garden.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Many water features, but not all, have sometimes complex pump and filtration

systems. Hot tubs and showers much like swimming pools often need treatments with chemicals to allow for human usage. Even small ponds work best when there is some movement in the water to stop it growing stagnant and smelly and for this you would need a submersible pump. This will require an electric installation, which should be carried out by a qualified electrician. Typically water features don't require to be plumbed in to mains supply water.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE LIGHT

You can make use of daylight as well as the nighttime options. Using a water bowl or a pond lined with black liner will reflect the sky and bounce light around the space. Lit well, water features can really come alive at night, chasing shadows across the wall or eliminating a focal point from the house. ●

Earth Designs is a proud member of the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Association of Professional Landscapers.

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