



Natural Ponds and Water Features FAQ

What is a natural pond and how do they work?

Natural, or ecosystem, ponds are designed to replicate natural biological processes which means they are low maintenance, completely natural and require no nasty chemicals to keep them looking beautiful. The aim with an ecosystem pond is to strike a balance between nutrient load in the water, the plants and the bacteria throughout the pond. This is referred to as the nitrogen cycle, which is a multi-step process that breaks down waste in the pond into usable components for plants to use as food. As the name suggests, we seek to create a thriving ecosystem that will be home to many invertebrates and microorganisms that you'll never see but work hard within the system to keep it balanced. Beyond the environmental benefits, natural ponds look amazing, sound beautiful and it's widely accepted that the sound of running water reduces our stress levels and creates a sense of calm. You can learn more here: <https://www.benhutchinsonlandscapes.com.au/news-and-tips/what-is-an-ecosystem-pond>

Do ponds attract wildlife?

Even in the first few months of owning a natural pond, the wildlife it attracts will amaze you. Birds, insects, lizards, frogs, and maybe the odd marsupial if you're in the right area. You can further enhance your natural pond or water feature with marginal plants that create habitat for frogs and insects to set up a home. Frog calls emanating from your water feature are pure joy to hear and watching birds take a drink or bath is so special.

How much maintenance is involved?

Less than you'd think! In a smaller pond or stream, maintenance might just involve annually cutting back aquatic plants and getting on top of some algae at the end of summer. In a larger recreation pond with a more complex wetland filter it might require a larger annual clean including a partial water change, cutting back plants, cleaning rocks with a high pressure hose and some additional bacterial based water treatments. Of course it all depends on the type of natural pond or water feature you have. Whatever you choose, you'll probably want to scoop out any fallen leaves, pull out weeds and generally keep it looking lovely as often as you think it needs a clean.

You can either conduct annual maintenance yourself or you can get someone (like us) in to perform a full clean and reset for you. It's also important to note that the constant movement of water in the pond will prevent mosquitoes from breeding, as they prefer still water.

When it comes to sourcing water treatments, fish & plant food and other pond care items, we recommend you visit <https://thenaturalpondstore.com.au/>. They also have a learning hub (and continue to add to it) where you can learn more about all the elements that make up a natural pond and water feature.

What is power consumption like?

You need power to run a pond because they require a pump to ensure the filtration system works effectively which ensures your pond is looking beautiful and crystal clear all the time.

In terms of 'how much power is required?', it's entirely based on the size of the pond and the water flow rate required. There are many options available when choosing a pump, but it all depends on the size of the system that you install. We always recommend the most energy efficient pump for all our natural ponds and water features.

Can I add fish?

Absolutely! There is a huge range of fish that can be used in a pond, from simple goldfish to an abundance of native fish varieties. You can learn more about fish suitable for ponds on our website

<https://www.benhutchinsonlandscapes.com.au/news-and-tips/fish-for-backyard-ponds>

Fish are an excellent addition to any pond as they help to balance out the ecosystem by feeding on small insects and algae. The waste the fish produce then provide vital nutrients for plants and microorganisms as their food. Fish are also wonderful to simply watch and feeding them is genuinely fun.



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Can I use my pond for swimming?

Yes, you certainly can! Natural ponds are so wonderful to swim in on a hot day and they hold their temperature very well during the warmer months, anywhere between 20-28 degrees. These ponds can be great for those who are sensitive to chemicals such as chlorine, as they use a natural filtration system and require no nasty chemicals to keep them looking great. That said, you need to read the next questions on pool fencing and permits.

Do I need pool fencing?

According to the Victorian Building Authority, ornamental ponds do not require a pool fence. They state that “barriers aren’t required for fish ponds or dams”. If you install an ornamental pond with the intention of using it for swimming, then yes you will need to apply for relevant permits and install a compliant pool fence.



Information sourced from <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/swimming-pools/pool-safety-barriers>

Do I need a permit?

If you’re just building an ornamental natural pond or water feature, the short answer is, no. Here is the excerpt from the Victorian Building Authority website that verifies this:



Ornamental ponds, water features and associated works

Ornamental ponds and water features do not require a building permit – provided the intended use is ornamental only. If connection to mains water or a drain is required, this is plumbing work and you will require a licensed plumber.

Ornamental ponds and water features have different requirements to swimming pools and spas, which require a safety barrier and building permit.



Be aware that any structure containing water may pose a risk of drowning – even if a safety barrier is not legally required.



If you add other structural elements such as large decking, retaining walls, pergola, gazebo etc to your landscaping then yes, you will probably need a building permit or maybe even a planning permit. Each Council has different requirements but all refer back to the Victorian Building Authority, so it’s best to check with your Council before you start.

Information sourced from <https://www.vba.vic.gov.au/consumers/home-renovation-essentials/landscaping>

How much does a pond cost?

This is a big question we get, and it’s hard to give an answer as every pond is unique and designed exclusively for the client and their circumstances. We consider elements such as site access, how much excavation is required (including finding rock after we start), the fall on the block (which can influence the build particularly for a waterfall), type of rock chosen for the project, plus a myriad of other considerations such as automatic dosing systems, lighting, plants, fish, and integrations with the rest of the garden.

Regardless of what you choose, we can work with you to balance your desires and budget. But know that a large recreation pond is often much cheaper than a conventional swimming pool and is a tempting solution!