

Pond Management



Ponds are important elements of the landscape, for biodiversity, heritage and the community. Approximately two thirds of Britain's freshwater plants and animals can be found somewhere in permanent and temporary ponds.

Ponds can be defined as man-made or natural waterbodies between 1m² and 2ha in area, which hold water for at least 4 months of the year. In the UK over 75% of ponds that existed at the beginning of the 20th century have now gone, and the quality of the remaining ponds is also declining. This is often due to pollution and poor management.

Is pond management required?

Ponds appearing to be of poor quality may actually contain a wide variety of species and be valuable for wildlife. Advice should be sought before any pond management is begun.

Most natural ponds will need no management at all.

There is no such thing as an 'ideal' pond.

General principles of pond management:

- Make the most of existing habitats.
- Avoid making all ponds look the same.
- Do not suddenly change a management regime.
- Try and create buffer zones around ponds.

Important aspects of pond management, summarised in this advice note, include management of water levels, vegetation, trees and silt.

Further advice on pond management can be found at: <http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/>.

Water Level Management

Water level fluctuations in ponds are natural.

Drawdown zones should be protected – do not dig out or steepen their edges, do not store material/dredgings on them and do not work from them.

On steep sided ponds, consider pulling back the banks to create shallow-sided drawdown zones.

Shallow ponds are valuable – they do not need to be deepened to enhance their value, although a range of water depths provides a variety of habitats.

Temporary, natural drying out of ponds is not disastrous – many species have adapted to this and some species exploit temporary ponds.



For further information please contact:



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Vegetation Management

Extensive removal of pond vegetation is damaging.

Aim to create a mosaic of habitats (e.g. muddy margins, shaded areas, dense stands of emergent vegetation, areas of floating vegetation, open water, variations in plant density).

Removed vegetation can be left on the bank to allow animals to make their way back to water, or rinsed by swishing the plants in pond water before removal to wash out slow moving/ delicate species.

Care should be taken with non-native, invasive species. If found, quick action should be taken to stop their establishment. If established, appropriate management should be taken. If herbicide use is needed to control it agreement from the Environment Agency will be required to do this. More information on non-native, invasive species can be found at: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/>.

Tree Management around Ponds

Trees growing in, over and around ponds make a good place for wildlife, especially newts which like to have a sheltered place to hibernate in the winter.

Trees, leaves and woody debris around a pond can be important for many species.

Dead wood in ponds is also great for wildlife, providing shelter and egg-laying sites for some dragonflies and damselflies and many other species.

Many wetland plants can grow in partial shade so complete clearance of surrounding trees is not necessary. However, some tree clearance may be beneficial of heavily shaded ponds to prevent shading out of sensitive plants and amphibians. It should be cleared in small sections.

Trees can be managed by pollarding, coppicing or trimming, or by complete felling.

Silt Management

Desilting a pond can be undertaken for a range of purposes: landscape, recreation, amenity, economic or wildlife purposes. This advice note specifically relates to desilting for wildlife benefits.

Desilting a pond to deepen it is not necessary. Creating a new pond nearby may be a cheaper option than desilting.

Before silt is removed it is important to analyse it to determine if it is polluted and how it needs to be disposed of. Licences may be required to dispose of silt in some instances. Advice on this should be sought at an early stage.

Care should be taken not to damage lined ponds.

Small ponds could be desilted by hand, however, this is hard work. Mechanical excavation is more appropriate for large ponds.



Timing

There is no 'ideal' time to manage a pond, unless protected species are present.

The 'best' time for pond work is usually the period of (a) greatest benefit to the key species, or (b) when access is easiest.

Tree work is usually done in the winter.

Work in water is usually easiest when water levels are lowest (i.e. in later summer and early autumn).

For further information please contact: