Making your pond hedgehog friendly

Wildlife ponds are really valuable addition to any garden, as they provide habitat for a wide range for birds, mammals and insects. They provide food and an all year round water supply, vital in the dryer summer months.

We may not see it often but hedgehogs are good swimmers. Despite this, hedgehogs often drown in domestic ponds as they struggle to get out if the sides are steep. Factors such as overhanging brick work or planting, slippery plastic liners and steep sides, can make it impossible for hedgehogs to clamber out.

Whether you already have a pond or are thinking of installing a new one, here are a few things you should consider to help our prickly pals.

1. ENSURE THAT THE SIDES OF THE POND ARE NOT TOO STEEP.

Aim for a natural looking pond, with rocks providing steps, slopes and avoiding over hangs and outcrops.

2. PROVIDE A HEDGEHOG RAMP.

Ramps can be purchased, or you could make your own. Make sure that the ramp is securely fitted. Ensure one end rests on dry land and the bottom is secure at the bottom of the pond. A large stone or rock at the bottom of the pond could be used to secure the ramp. The ramp will need to be kept clean, otherwise algae may make the ramp too slippery for hedgehogs to use. The ramp will also need to have grooves or wooden slats to give little hedgehog feet something to grip onto.

3. ENSURE THAT AT LEAST ONE SIDE OF THE POND HAS A GENTLE SLOPE WHICH CAN FORM A BEACH.

As well as being helpful to hedgehogs and other mammals, shallow waters will provide another habitat for other insects and plants.
4. PLACE SOME ROCKS OR STONES IN THE WATER AGAINST THE SIDE OF YOUR POND.

These can form steps for hedgehogs to climb out (and there are few things cuter than a hedgehog climbing steps!) The rocks will provide another habitat for insects to thrive in.

5. PLANT POTS FULL OF WILDLIFE ENCOURAGING AQUATIC PLANTS CAN BE PLACED AT THE EDGE OF YOUR POND.

Make sure that the plant pots are stable and that the top of the pot provides a hedgehog sized platform between the water and dry land. Make sure you use native plants, avoiding non-native invasive plants.

6. USE NON TOXIC MATERIALS AND CHEMICALS.

Don’t place materials such as carpet in your pond as they may contain fire retardant chemicals that could harm hedgehogs and other wildlife and plants. Where possible stick to natural materials such as rocks and wood.

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about the University of Liverpool’s Hedgehog Friendly Campus Scheme by following us on Twitter @LivUniHedgehogs Or by emailing Zoë Chapman, Hedgehog Champion, University of Liverpool, Z.Chapman@liverpool.ac.uk