

Building a Water Feature

Bubbling water features provide a means to enhance many different outdoor spaces. If properly designed and constructed, this type of fountain can operate year-round, providing a unique spot of interest and activity in your garden. Whether originally conceived as a courtyard accent or as part of a larger backyard habitat, the sight and sound of moving water will call all kinds of wildlife. The basic structure of a bubbling feature is simple and can be adapted in size, shape and/or to incorporate a wide variety of materials. Let your creativity show!

Aesthetic Considerations

The sight and bubble-gurgle-trickle sound of your water feature creates an engaging focal point. If possible, place your fountain where it can be viewed frequently, from indoors or out. Choose materials and modify the basic design to fit the style of your home and garden (formal, informal, country cottage, Japanese or English garden...) Stone pebbles, brick, tile, wood... all are options and will fit better if they echo existing structures. Although algae will form anywhere that sunlight and water come together, if you choose dark colored materials, the "green goo" will blend and make the feature look more "natural". As mentioned above, the size of this feature can vary greatly. The reservoir must be large enough to accommodate fountain size and splash, but the visual border can be extended well beyond the edge of the basin by simply spreading the pebbles out onto "dry" land.

Functional/Technical Considerations

Cross-section of basic stone bubbler using a 2' diameter x 16" deep tub.

Basin – Can be made of plastic, fiberglass, concrete or flexible rubber liner. Can be any size or shape, however keep in mind:

- Depth – 16-24" is best for wintering and creates a reservoir large enough to minimize "topping up."
- Surface area – Large enough to accommodate any splash, keeping the water in the system. This will vary based on the height and size of your fountain piece and the windiness of your location.
- Placement – Top edge of the basin should be level and sit approx 1" above the surrounding ground to ensure a "closed system" i.e. prevent run-off from muddying the water.

Grating – This will create a false bottom for pebbles; minimize materials & maximize reservoir capacity. This should be a non-corrosive with openings small enough to keep pebbles from dropping through. Cut a "trap door" in the grating to allow easy access to the pump without dismantling the whole structure. This opening can also be used for quick clean-outs with a wet/dry vacuum.

Grating Supports – Bricks, blocks, anything structurally strong enough to support the fountain piece. In our cross-section we've used a 3.5 gal plastic bucket. The slits allow for full water flow, easy placement & maximizing water capacity.

Pump – A small submersible pump with the capacity of 100-200 gallons per hour usually works very well and costs less than \$2.00 per month to operate continuously. In selecting the pump, consider the manufacturer's warranty, cord length, and built-in filtering and flow control features.

Power Source – A standard GFCI electrical outlet should be located 5-20' from the basin to meet code. Pump cord lengths vary from 6-20' on different models (most are 15'). So, plan accordingly (no extension cords please).

Routine Maintenance

Very Simple! Top off the water level weekly with your garden hose. Clean out 1-2 times per year depending on your “debris load.”

Note: Moving water inhibits mosquito breeding and the pebbles create a natural filter which keeps the water fresh and healthy. No need for chemical treatment.

Accommodating Wildlife

Wildlife will instinctively find your water feature... “Build it and they will come”... critters you didn’t even know were in the neighborhood. Make sure all heavy objects are well seated/anchored – no precarious perches. Provide enough space in your basin to “dish out” the pebbles for a shallow bathing area. Landscape with nearby trees, bushes and grasses to provide protection and perching spots for a cautious approach. Placing bird feeders in the area will provoke visitation as well. Now, sit back, watch, listen and enjoy.



Overland Park
8424 Farley
913.642.6503

Shawnee
7036 Nieman
913.631.6121

Liberty
830 W Liberty Dr
816.781.0001