

Make a Dog Pond

Install a dog pond to keep your dog cool and out of the pool.

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In the heat of summer, water-loving dogs head to the nearest form of standing water for a cooling wallow. If you're lucky enough to own a pool or spa, you're likely familiar with the chore of cleaning your pet's hair out of the filter. Without pools, canines prefer swamps, lakes, mud puddles, and the like, with obviously dirty drawbacks.

Consider adding to the beauty of your home's landscape, while at the same time providing a safe and clean swimming hole for your dog. Avoid using an unsightly kiddie pool, and install a shallow splash pond.

To ensure your dog's safety, allow unsupervised access to this pond only when you're certain she can easily exit on her own.

Backyard ponds have grown tremendously in popularity. As a result, options abound for dog lovers looking to construct a custom-made spot for canine cool-downs. Three basic ingredients for any successful splash pond include a liner, pump, and a few pieces of flexible tubing. You can find most of these supplies at your local home improvement store, nursery, or pet store.

Pre-formed, hard-plastic pond shells come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Choose one with ledges, designed to hold aquatic plant pots. Your dog can use these as steps to safely enter and exit the water.

For medium to small dogs, modify a pre-formed pond for increased safety. Because most are between 18 and 24 inches deep, you'll likely need to add a safety ramp your dog can use to get into and out of the water. You can make the pond shallower by stacking bricks or piling gravel at the bottom. This will prevent her head from dipping below the surface and also give her a firm footing.

Choose a pump rated for the size of pond you'll be installing. Ask a qualified salesperson for help. The pump will empty the pond for regular cleanings and can power a small fountain or waterfall, which you may want to install for added beauty. You'll need a few pieces of flexible tubing to shuttle water to a fountain or waterfall. The pump also keeps water moving to discourage mosquitoes.

The installation process for pre-formed ponds takes little effort. Choose your site, dig, and drop. It's that easy. Next, use stone to conceal the edges, as well as any flexible tubing installed to power water features.

You'll need to periodically drain and clean the pond, just as you would treat an above-ground kiddie pool, to ensure proper sanitation and prevent mosquito problems. Kill two birds with one stone by using a submersible pump to carry dirty water to a nearby flower bed or garden.

Plant a few durable landscape plants around the perimeter, and you have a show piece you can be proud of. Best of all, your dog will have a place of her own to keep cool this summer, and you'll save yourself the hassle of a dirty pool filter.