

How to Create a Small, Attractive Water Feature



The secret is out: Water features are in. And with this fact comes a loss of originality, creativity, and more of the same old, same old. Perhaps you know what I'm talking about. Does this formula sound familiar? 1. Dig a hole in your backyard. 2. Throw in a rubber liner. 3. Anchor with *many* rocks (ah, the ubiquitous stone necklace). 4. Drop in a pump. Presto! You have a garden pond!

Please don't get me wrong. I like water gardening and do indeed have a pond in my backyard. But there are places where a full-blown water garden complete with rushing stream looks appropriate and places where one fits about as well as a Rolex at a Wal-Mart jewelry counter.

We probably agree on one thing, though: The sound of moving water is indeed relaxing. Here's some advice on creating and installing a smaller, funky water feature that has some personality. What's that you say? The words "funky" and "water feature" can be used in the same sentence? They most certainly can.

SEARCHING FOR A FUNKY FOCAL POINT

On your next flea market shopping spree, keep your eyes peeled for a conversation-inspiring contraption. Once you find it, ask yourself, "How can I get water to run through this gadget?"

Finding just the right yard art for your garden will take time. I have one friend who can't wait to go back to Japan on business just so he can find that elusive but perfect piece of statuary for his Asian-themed garden. Then there are the rest of us, satisfied to rummage through junkyards and salvage lots in our quest for true art.

For me it was an old pedestal sink that said, "Garry, take me with you." I was searching for a small but interesting water feature as the last piece of my shade garden that sits alongside my screened porch. The sink has added a creative touch to the design.

6 TIPS FOR GETTING FUNKY TO FUNCTION

The process of making one of these little gems work in your garden is pretty simple.

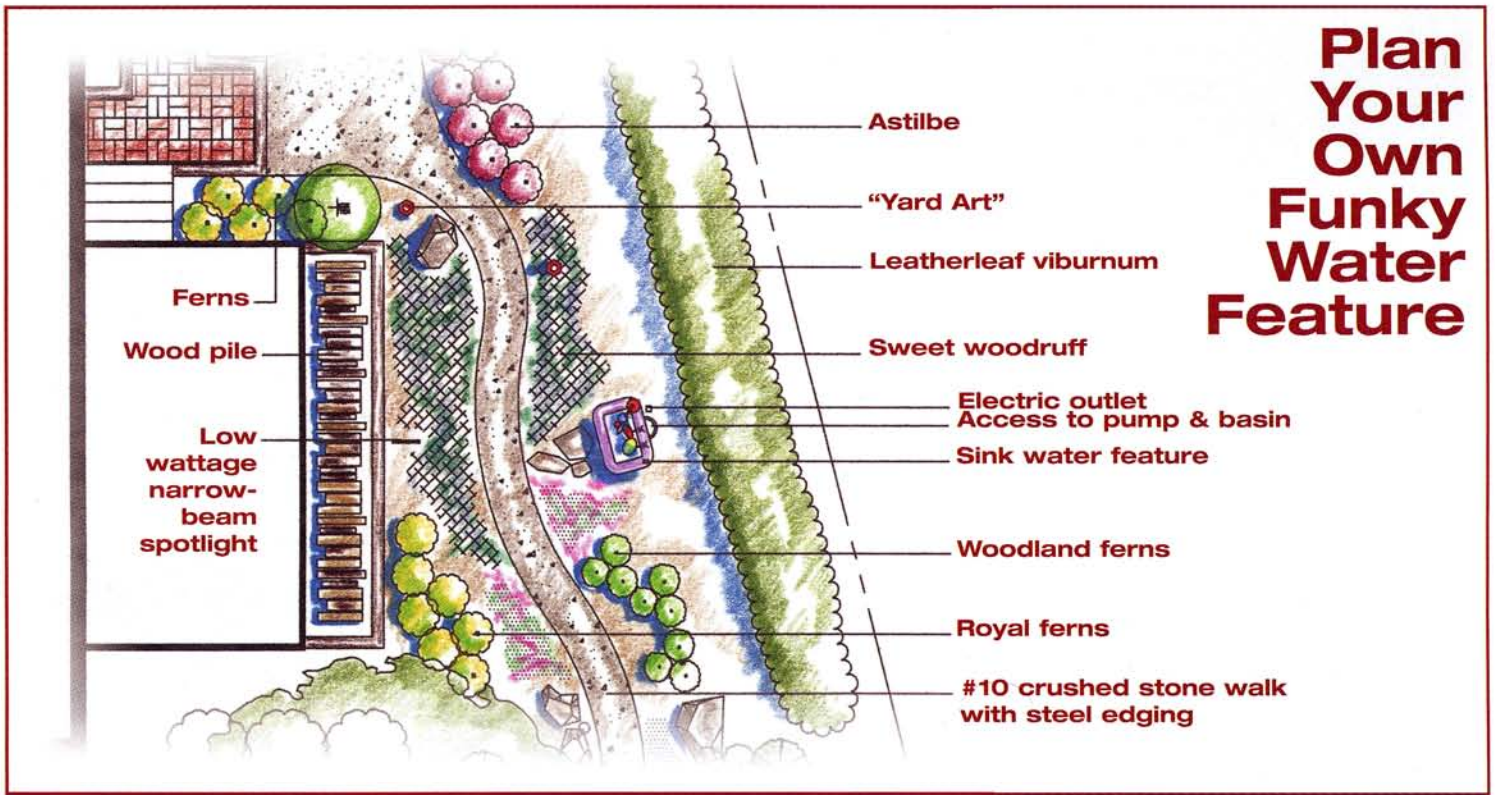
1. Take time to choose the perfect spot. First, choose the location where the gentle sound of running water will give you the most enjoyment. Do not just look at spaces where you currently have electrical power available. (A fountain in the carport will probably not provide you with much enjoyment.) Once you found the right spot – perhaps one that serves as an attractive focal point – have an electrician install a GFCI outlet in a nearby place where it can be hidden behind rocks or plants.

An old sink can be transformed into an attractive water feature for your garden.



Story and
Photos by
Garry L.
Menendez,
RLA

Plan Your Own Funky Water Feature



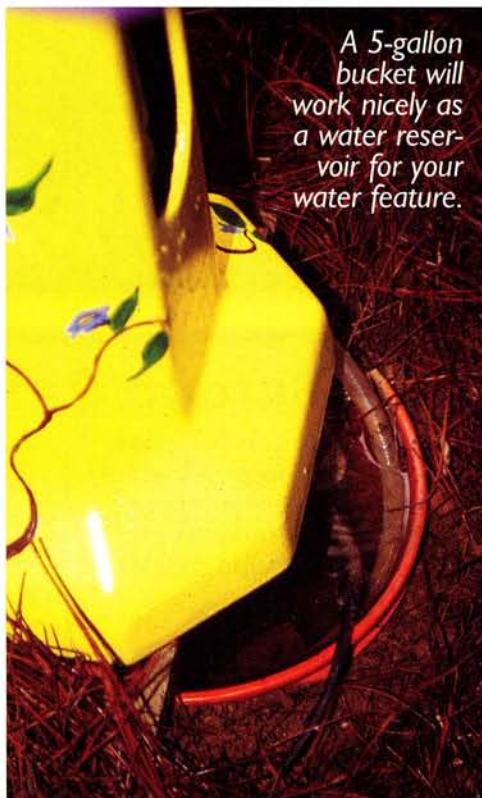
2. Create the water reservoir. Dig a hole that will accommodate a five-gallon bucket (or thereabouts). This will be your reservoir of water in which the pump rests and the water flows. Make sure the lip of this bucket is slightly higher than the surrounding grade so any overflow from rains, etc. has a chance to escape. You may also want to install some type of observational tube or indicator to allow you to keep track of the reservoir water level and thus prevent a burned out pump. I did this with a nifty half-inch piece of PVC pipe, housing a small flag stuck into a couple of wine corks and then attaching this to the side of the bucket. You can do it. Be creative!

3. Place a large stepping stone over most of the opening of your reservoir bucket or tub. You will need a bit of room to slip through the drainpipe, outflow hose from pump, and the electrical cord. Depending on how the water flows from your "art" you may opt for an iron or steel grate which may rest completely over your reservoir and then concealed with river rock.

4. Use the appropriate pump for the job. When you've completed the first three steps, it's time to make a run to the garden center in search of a pump and tubing. You must get the same size tubing as the pump outflow indicates.

A word of advice about pump selection. On the box you will see numbers like 150 gallons per hour (gph), 200 gph, 300

gph, etc. That number is the amount of water that will typically be flowing to a height of about one foot. As the height of the water feature above the pump increases, the gph gradually decreases. So if you want 150 gph to flow through a water feature that sits five feet high, you'll have to buy a bigger pump. (Check the box for information about "maximum lift" or "head height" to make sure the pump will do the job.)



A 5-gallon bucket will work nicely as a water reservoir for your water feature.

Also, you should buy a pump that has some type of flow control so you can adjust the flow rate and alter the sound of trickling water.

Each pump is a bit different, so it's best to follow the in-box instructions when you're ready to install fittings and clamps. Here's one good trick to remember, though. Don't put the pump directly on the bottom of the reservoir. Instead, set it on a brick or rock that sits on the bottom. By elevating the pump, any crud that builds up in the bottom of the bucket will stay clear of the pump's intake, thus prolonging its life.

5. Install a Y-valve for emptying old water. If you're really ambitious, you can install a Y-valve on your outflow tubing. This will make it easier to empty to reservoir bucket when the water gets "old" or green. (If you have a really small water feature, you can probably skip this step.)

6. Position the water feature itself. Now that you've made at least three trips to the garden center to exchange hoses, fittings, and clamps, you can install the water feature. Position your sculpture over the base stone or grate, hook up the pumps and tubes, fill the reservoir with water, and plug it in. You may also want to highlight this wondrous creation with a low wattage, narrow beam spotlight for nighttime enjoyment.

So get out there and make a splash in your garden. Be daring, be creative, be you. Happy hunting (yard sales, that is)! 🐾