



Water feature at Cavanaugh Ridge.

Ponds AND WATER FEATURES

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY **MELANIE REKOLA**

With staycations becoming more popular, creating a beautiful backyard to escape to is a worthy investment. No backyard paradise is quite complete without the soothing sounds of water to make you feel cool, even when temperatures are blazing.

Adding a dreamy backyard water feature can be simple, extravagant or somewhere in between. There are options for every taste and budget.

WATER BOWLS

These large, watertight bowls are an easy addition, fitting any space. They have a bubbler/small filtering system and most are deep enough to add a variety of water plants. Imagine having water bowls instead of planters on a backyard patio – you would never have to worry about watering again!

WATER FOUNTAINS

Another quick way to add a tranquil trickle of water to your backyard oasis is through a prefabricated fountain. Many styles and sizes are available in a ready-to-use kit format. Weight needs to be considered as some of the hefty ones require a concrete footing. *Continued on page 34*

PONDS

Ponds, streams and waterfalls let you take creativity to the extreme in your landscape design. As these are custom made, you can design anything imaginable, from a cool modern vibe to something Mother Nature designed herself – as long as you have the right budget in place as these can be costly.

Shelves of different depths within a pond interior can be created for certain water plants, as each has its own specific requirements. Shallow areas also act as escape routes in the event a pet or wildlife accidentally falls in.

Ponds need to be at least four feet deep (preferably deeper) if you'd like to overwinter frogs and fish successfully. UV filters

and pumps need to be carefully planned and calculated for the amount of water present and if you decide to include fish, you will need an extensive filtering system.

Pond accessories are fun and exciting! There is nothing quite like the feeling of walking on water where a cool, floating step is present. Other fun features include architecturally designed, artisan metal spout scuppers, spillways and mounted spill-bowls that replace traditional waterfall weirs. You can even include a floating island filled with plants; you'd be surprised how many traditional garden plants do well in these environments and they look quite natural once the plantings fill in and spill over the edges.



Melanie's Pond Plant Picks

The world of water gardening is extensive. Here are a few favourite, hardy, native-to-Ontario perennials to get you started.



Water Lily / *Nymphaea odorata* – Likely the first water plant that comes to mind, lovely lily is a wonderful, free-flowering plant for any pond. Perfect, glistening white flowers with yellow centres are formed throughout the summer months. It prefers still waters though, so always plant this beauty far away from waterfalls.



Pickerelweed / *Pontederia cordata* – A carefree-growth habit and lovely lavender blooms make this a colourful addition to any pond.



Marsh Marigold / *Caltha palustris* – Sunny buttercup blooms arrive in early spring, but only for a brief time. However, it's still a worthy water garden addition for its pretty leaves.



Horsetail Rush / *Equisetum hyemale* – Wonderful stiff upright stems resemble a tiny bamboo forest – perfect for pond margins. It can spread aggressively so it's best planted in a contained area.

POND MAINTENANCE

Ponds do take work and most need to be shut down in fall and opened in spring, just like a swimming pool. Most of the work happens in spring and mucking out a pond is dirty business. Hip waders help! The rest of the year is much easier, as long as you keep up a good maintenance program. An ideal healthy maintenance schedule requires an occasional filter cleaning, replacing 20 per

cent of the water with fresh water weekly and adding beneficial bacteria when needed. This is even more important for smaller features as their balance gets disrupted easily. The larger the pond, the easier it is to maintain and if it's large enough, it will mostly take care of itself. Don't forget to consider the ongoing electricity and pump/filter replacement costs too.

The best part of including a water feature in your oasis is all the birds and wildlife it will attract! What outdoor retreat would be truly complete without them? **OH**

Melanie is a certified horticulturalist and landscape designer.