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Dripping ponds can attract wildlife

How to make - what to plant

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For many, one of the joys of living in our area is the opportunity to observe the wildlife. If you have left the natural vegetation in your yard, you find yourself surrounded by many small residents. One good way to attract more is by providing water.

A shallow pool can be dug and lined with cement. It is very important that the completed pool be no deeper than two inches, with gradual sloping sides so that baby birds can escape if crowded into the water. A rock or group of rocks can be added to provide additional footing. A pond can also be made by sinking a garbage can lid into the ground and lining it with gravel to provide footing.

A large baked clay or terra cotta saucer, such as those sold for large pots is also good. The pond should be cleaned out weekly.

Birds are particularly attracted by movement of water. This can be attained, and at the same time the chore of keeping the pool filled, by providing a slow, steady drip. Perhaps the easiest way is to purchase a saddle valve (\$3.19 at the Building Supply) which will fit any pipe from three-eighths to three-fourths inch in size — perhaps the pipe leading up to an outside faucet. The label says it is "self-piercing," so you don't have to drill a hole in the pipe or change any fittings. Quarter inch copper tubing can be stretched in a shallow trench from the outlet to your pool. If the terminal end of the tubing is arched above the surface of the pool about eight or 10 inches, the drip will keep the surface in motion and the rate of drip can be adjusted by the valve to keep the pool full and fresh without waste of water. Probably no tools other than a screwdriver and pair of pliers are needed for installation. (The Building Supply will flare one end of the tubing for 50 cents.)

It is very desirable to locate the pool near a bush, as birds and small animals feel more secure if there is nearby cover. If it is placed in partial or filtered shade,

the water will not become over-heated in summer and will not evaporate as rapidly. A dead branch or cholla skeleton can provide an overhanging perch, making an attractive setting for viewing or photographing.

If you place the pool near vegetation, make sure that it is of a type that can withstand any extra moisture that may overflow. Some desert plants may die if they get too much water. Jojoba is one that does well with extra moisture and provides attractive cover. Or you may want to plant some shrubs nearby that attract birds. Lemanade Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) is a low-growing shrub that produces yellow flowers, and red berries in summer. Tomatillo (*Lycium spp.*) is a shrub which bears small orangish berries, semi-annually that attracts birds. Chuparosa (*Beloperone californica*) is another attractive shrub which bears bright red flowers in spring and attracts hummingbirds, orioles and finches. More detailed information on plants that attract birds can be obtained through the Desert Botanical Garden.

Many people place their pools close enough to their home that attracted wildlife can be viewed from a window. This can provide a delightful and relaxing pastime from breakfast to the evening hours at sundown.