

COMPLEMENT YOUR ROSES WITH WATER FEATURES

By Marty Hammond

ARS Award of Merit, printed in Oct. 2002 *The American Rose* as '**Water Features**'

The sound of water cascading gently over rock waterfalls or splashing softly from a fountain, or sparkling in the sunshine of a pool, can give you many hours of relaxation and tranquillity. I found my rose landscape was not complete, till we finished the waterfalls. It has been a delightful addition to our rose garden, and adds peacefulness to the beauty of our roses.

Our primary concern was to make our waterfalls design appropriate to our home and complement our existing landscape. Our roses are the dominate feature in our landscape, accented with companion plants and shade plants. At first, I was concerned about the possibility of increased mildew on the roses, due to excess moisture created by running water. I can honestly say, much to my delight and surprise, I have not seen any increase in mildew. I attribute this to the fact we positioned the waterfalls structure in full all day sun. We do experience more water evaporation, but that is to be expected.

Though fountains are artificial and rarely look at home in a natural landscape, they still add a delightful sight and sound appeal. We added a small fountain to the largest of six waterfall pools, which has added a very positive esthetic value. Fountains can range between large plumed statuary structures in a formal garden, to a small fountain head within a waterfall pool such as ours. There are many small fountain heads available to give a variety of spray patterns.

If you have enough space that will accommodate a stream with your waterfalls, then you will have an added feature which is most appealing. Even a simple free standing container water garden on the patio or terrace, or a birdbath at the rose gardens edge will add interest and character, and may be ideal for some sites. Your water feature does not need to be large and significant to offer a bit of enjoyment to you and your visitors.

Planning is the key to any successful water feature project, and selecting the perfect site for a waterfalls, stream or fountain is crucial. The water feature needs to be attractive when the water is not flowing, as well as it is when the pump is running. In most cases, you'll want to select a sunny spot, but if possible, locate the main viewing position in the shade. Select a site which provides a comfortable spot from which to enjoy the water, and yet away from the middle of a path, so it doesn't become an annoying obstacle. For best results, select a site that does not collect runoff when it rains or from your landscape watering system.

Your waterfalls or fountain can provide considerable enjoyment from indoors if you take the time to site is properly. We constructed six adjoining pools, with the top two pools serving also as bird baths. We have enjoyed many hours of viewing the birds, which are attracted to the water, as well as the seed feeder we have on the patio. Many of the birds that frequent our waterfalls also relish tasty morsels of aphids and other insects on the roses. WE have a least 5 bird nests that I know of in vines, and climbers, and one pair of wrens are nesting in the nest box on the patio. The mess the birds make on the patio from the seed feeder and around the waterfalls is a small price to pay for the benefit and enjoyment they provide.

Once you have determined the appropriate site for your water feature, then next step is to decide how large you want the water feature to be. The major objective is to have it blend in with your existing garden style, or use it to help establish a style. If carefully contrived, a waterfall and stream can imitate nature and become an integral part of the garden. Most

gardeners find it easier to install pre-formed cascades or waterfalls, than to create their own. WE chose however, to design and build our own water feature, which turned out to be very challenging. We located it in full sun outside the edge of our patio. We enjoy the shade of the patio while surrounded by hanging basket roses and container roses in the foreground and the landscape roses in the background, with full view from every room in the back of the house.

It is wise to install the water feature before buying a pump, so water can be run through the unit for a timed period to accurately calculate the size pump you will need. Submersible pumps can operate most water features and these pumps and fittings have become so varied and versatile, they can be both economical and discreet. These sealed electrical units are available in a range of shapes and sizes. Our waterfalls and fountain are operated independently, using two pumps. For most small water features, a low-voltage pump is sufficient. When significant amounts of water are to be moved, a more traditional unit is needed. When choosing a pump, always select one that will deliver slightly more water over a given time than is required. Having spare capacity allows simple changes to be made if desired.

Plan on having access to electricity to operate the pump at the site you select. Most pumps have built in filters to help keep the water clear. A nearby source of electricity also makes lighting the pond or fountain more convenient. Lighting effects can be incorporated into the water feature either under the water, above it, or located on the ground depending on the effect you want to create. Most lighting systems are variations of a few basic weatherproof fittings. The secret of successful lighting is to light specific areas individually, to build up an overall effect. Besides waterfalls, fountains, and streams, there can be other plumed water features such as an old hand pump or an overflowing ladle, or a waterwheel, to name just a few. There is no limit to the imagination of what you can create.

Easy access to water is an important factor. Every pool needs to be filled up or topped off from time to time, to ensure the water level doesn't drop too low, and burn out the pump motor. Placing your water feature within easy reach of an outdoor faucet makes it easy to accomplish this using a garden hose. We ran a tee from the major high-pressure water line, to the back of the water structure. This gives us an additional faucet, not only for the waterfalls, but also for the landscape plants.

You may choose to have colorful and popular aquatic plants or add fish to your pools. You will need to do some research to determine if plants or fish are for your particular water feature design. The stream-side planting areas can be difficult, and care must be taken to assure enough water is provided, with adequate drainage away from the pools. Designing planting areas within the waterfall itself as we did, can be very artistic. There are many plants that can grow happily in limited space and remain in scale with the water feature, and harmonize with the rest of the garden. Contrasting foliage shapes, large and round versus sword-like, livens any pool, and add interest. I chose to incorporate 5 inch container and 1 gallon size planting space for miniature roses.

There are the few minor maintenance chores related to water features. Leaves and spent blossoms can be a major headache. The leaves and flower petals settle at the bottom of the pond and decompose if not cleaned out. When the water feature is located in the sun, algae will grow. Occasional pool cleaning will be necessary. If a pump is used, maintenance will be greatly determined by how clean the water is that it circulates. The pumps filter screen will need to be checked often when water contains organic matter. In my opinion, the pure joy of adding a water feature to your landscape to complement your roses, far outweighs these few maintenance chores.