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WATER FEATURES ARE GROWING IN POPULARITY

One of the popular trends in landscaping today is water gardening. Essentially, water gardening encompasses any permanent to semi-permanent change in your landscape that involves water. (I'm pretty sure that leaving your sprinkler on in your yard doesn't count.) What exactly is a water feature? A water feature is any décor, indoor or outdoor that involves the use of water, moving or otherwise and can range from the very elaborate to the very simple. These almost always involve some type of stonework, whether it's gravel, boulders, pavers, or slabs of stone. They often utilize a variety of plants and will sometimes involve fish.

The main types of water features are large ponds, small ponds, basin features, and pond-less waterfalls (with and without ponds). Large ponds are characterized as being anything over eight feet in diameter and small ponds are anything smaller than eight feet. Ponds can be stocked with koi, a decorative type of fish. They can involve static water (no water flow) or they can incorporate moving water through the means of a waterfall or an aerator. If a pond is stocked with any kind of fish some type of water flow is highly recommended in order to keep a steady source of oxygen moving into the water.

The key to a pond-less waterfall is that it disappears at the end, generally into some type of stone or gravel which conceals a basin and a pump. The basin holds the appropriate amount of water and the pump is constantly sending the water from the basin to the top of the waterfall. This type of water feature is very versatile in terms of being able to take up either a small or large amount of space, depending on the amount of landscape you have available. Variations can be made in terms of height, length, the number of waterfalls, and the number of water pools.

Basin water features, also called bubblers, are similar to pond-less waterfalls in that they also use a basin and a pump hidden under gravel. In this feature the water is sent from the basin up through an object like a boulder or a bird bath. The end effect is a gurgling of water at the top of the chosen object with the water spilling

over the top, running back through the gravel, into the basin and repeating its cycle.

There are so many reasons that water features are growing in their popularity. With the hectic pace that seems to be all too common, there is nothing quite so relaxing walking out onto your back patio and hearing the tranquil sound of murmuring water. Numerous studies have been conducted to understand why the sound of moving water has a relaxing effect on so many people. The theories are many. One very real possibility is that moving water has noise cancelling properties. If you live in an area with a great deal of traffic or near power lines or any other consistent noise, a water feature can mask the less pleasant sounds with the comforting noise of running water.

You may have an interest in adding a water feature to your outdoor living space. There are many of these projects that can be do-it-yourself. Be sure to check with a landscape professional before you begin your project. Depending on the type there may be calculations related to water flow and pump size. There are so many options and variations with water features, your outdoor oasis will only be limited by your imagination!