

# New in Homes

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## BACKYARD OASIS | 'Sight and sound of water is magical'



Many homeowners find backyard ponds and small waterfalls have a calming, peaceful effect.

## On the water front

Ponds, waterfalls can create soothing backyard retreats in relatively little time, designers say

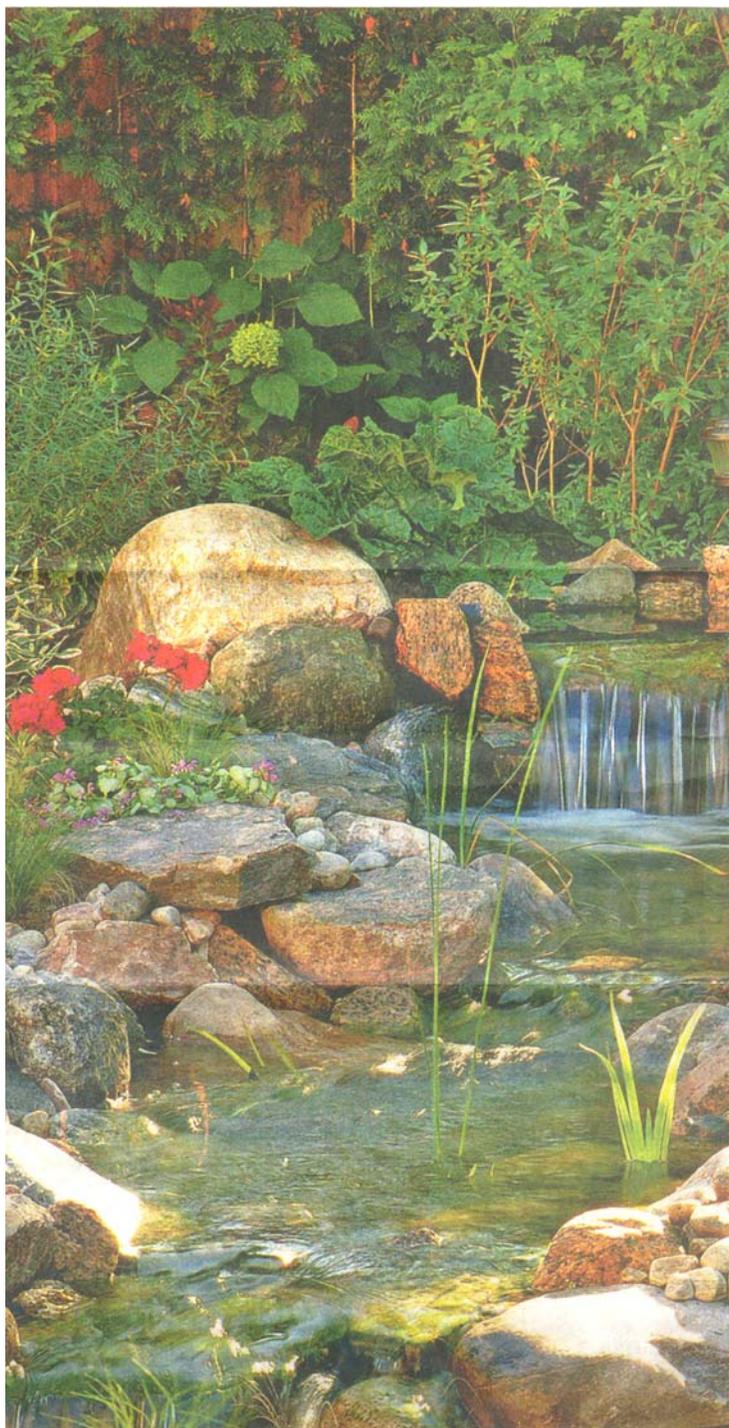
MARYLENE VESTERGOM • SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Mary and Robert Williams, who live in a new subdivision in Brampton with a small lot, wanted to quickly introduce some atmosphere into their garden.

"When you're in a new subdivision there is no privacy," Mary Williams says.

"With the lack of mature trees and vegetation of any kind, our yard was virgin territory. That's why we were quite excited to learn how the addition of a pond could quickly create warmth and a natural gardening habitat"

A Mexican retreat provided inspiration for Toronto's Robert and Judith Kanee.



"We enjoyed the calming effects of the numerous ponds and small waterfalls at this one particular spa we've stayed at over the years," says Robert Kanee.

"We decided we had to introduce this feature in our backyard. Aesthetically, Was beautiful. There is nothing more relaxing and peaceful than the sound of our two waterfalls and seeing our koi swimming amongst the water lilies - you just can't beat it"

David Antcliffé of Toronto's Ponds in the City understands why homeowners have been leaning toward these water features. '

"If you're looking for an instant presence, then a pond makes sense. The added bonus: it's a great relaxer," says Antcliffé.

"Imagine sitting back in your garden. Not only will you be able to appreciate its beauty, but the sight and sound of the water is magical."

"A pond creates an amazing atmosphere," says Joel Loblaw, of Toronto's Earth Inc. Designed Landscapes.

"And' the white noise introduced by the trickling sound of water is a strong way to do just that.

"One of the biggest challenges new homeowners encounter when planning their landscape is appreciating the fact that it takes time for their gardens to mature," Loblaw says.

For new homeowners looking at carving out an oasis in their backyard, a water feature brings character within the first year of installation.

"Remember," says Loblaw, "a garden isn't static and adding a pond with a stream or a waterfall can only add to the additional beauty to your yard, giving you hours of pleasure, which changes daily."

Basic ponds are available at your local hardware store for under \$1,000 and in most cases include a prefabricated pond, pump and pre-filter - but they can be quite labour-intensive.

For those who are considering investing in their green thumb, and are looking for a feature they could use 365 days a year, perhaps one of the hottest trends is ponds that develop a naturally balanced ecosystem, just like Mother Nature.

"A balanced ecosystem in a pond needs certain ingredients to work effectively," says Antcliffé. With an Aquascape Designs Ecosystem, he says, "we can guarantee that your ponds will have crystal-clear water and low maintenance without the use of any chemicals."

This safety factor was very important to the Williamses.

"We have kids and quite an array of pets that also enjoys the backyard," says Mary Williams.

"I didn't want to introduce chemicals that could be harmful in any way. I also didn't want to destroy the natural plant life nor the fish we had in the pond."

The key to a successful pond is in a good filtration system.

"Having fish tanks in the house, we've seen first-hand what a good' filtration system can do," says Williams.

"The previous ponds' didn't have a balanced ecosystem and we were forever throwing in chemicals to clean the water and rid the air of the foul odour, which in turn would kill plant life and even the fish."

"Creating a balanced ecosystem is critical toward the success and enjoyment of your pond," says Antcliffé, providing a basic biology lesson.

"A natural ecosystem encompasses living plants and animals along with the non-living components of water, air and the sun's energy, all interacting together .

"You need a pump large enough to turn the water over at a minimum of every two hours.

"As well, oxygen created by the waterfall along with plants, birds, frogs, fish and the natural growth of beneficial bacteria colonizing on the rocks contribute to this important balance."

Since their latest installation, the Williamses haven't looked back.

"We had a smaller pond and then we ended up with a waterfall with a stream running through it," Williams says.

"Last summer we put in koi fish and within a week the koi jumped upstream just like they would in a natural stream-like setting. It was amazing."

For "ponders" like the Williams and Kanee alike, the enjoyment lives on in the winter, too. Gardens take on a second life with the installation of lights that glow under the snow.



**Joel Loblaw, of Toronto's Earth Inc. Designed Landscapes, says a quick way to create atmosphere in the backyard is to use a water feature.**

And don't worry about the fish - a special heater producing a small hole in the ice, along with a small pump for oxygen, make the pond a safe environment for winter hibernation.

For new homeowners, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere shouldn't stop at the interior of their homes.

After all, there is one more room that needs their decorating attention - the backyard.

## Sources

Ponds in the City, 416-4898166, [www.pondsinthecity.com](http://www.pondsinthecity.com)

Earth Inc. Designed Landscapes, 416-216-0378, [www.earthinc.com](http://www.earthinc.com)