

## Water: Providing It & Using It

Almost all of the UK's waterways are polluted. In 2022, a House of Commons Committee report on the state of UK rivers concluded that no river in England was free from chemical contamination. Only 14% of UK rivers had a "good" ecological status.



Water is very important for wildlife, so do try and include water somewhere in your garden, even if it's only a birdbath!

Whatever route you choose, make sure any kind of pond has a route in and out for bumble bees, newts, lizards and small birds.

**Container Ponds;** a water source in the garden doesn't have to be huge. They can be made from buckets, old tin or galvanised containers, half-barrels or cattle troughs.



**Hoverfly lagoons** are small (often tiny) pockets of water held in the forked branches of old trees, in shattered tree stumps or any hollow or crevasse in wood where water collects. Hoverflies LOVE lagoons and will repay you by eating many pests in your garden. For a pdf on how to create a hoverfly lagoon, click [here](#).

**Ponds** are incredibly important to wildlife as they support more invertebrate species than rivers. Many species will love a small pond including invertebrates (such as dragonflies), beetles, water bugs, frogs, toads, newt, grass snakes, birds, bats, deer, foxes and so forth. Generally speaking, if you can avoid using mains water to fill your container or pond, so much the better. Instead, use water from butts, rainwater collection tanks., or simply rely on heavy rain! If you have to use mains water, then try and mix it with collected rainwater.

### Links;

- **Freshwater Habitats Trust:**  
[www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk](http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk)
- **Lilies Water Gardens;**  
[www.lilieswatergardens.co.uk](http://www.lilieswatergardens.co.uk),
- **British Pond Plants;**  
[www.britishpondplants.co.uk](http://www.britishpondplants.co.uk),  
Organic, online/mail order.
- **Waterside Nursery;**  
[www.watersidenursery.co.uk](http://www.watersidenursery.co.uk).
- **Puddleplants:**  
[www.puddleplants.co.uk](http://www.puddleplants.co.uk).

### Creating Garden Ponds: Does what it says on the cover!



**Water butts;** set up water butts in as many places as possible by using diverters from a rain pipe. To store more water from any rain pipe, simply link together multiple water butts using proprietary kits, or buy a larger capacity. There are plenty of contemporary water-butt options available if you're looking for something attractive.

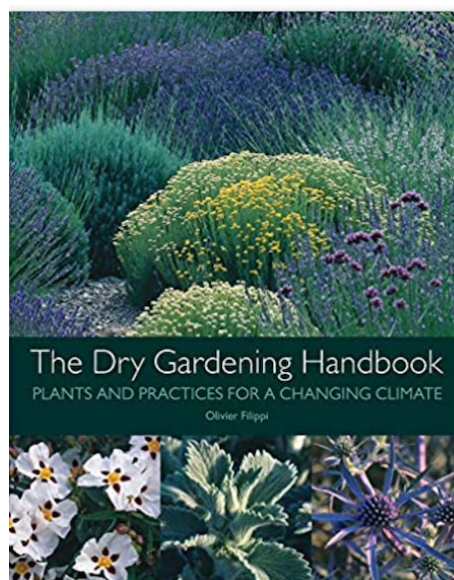
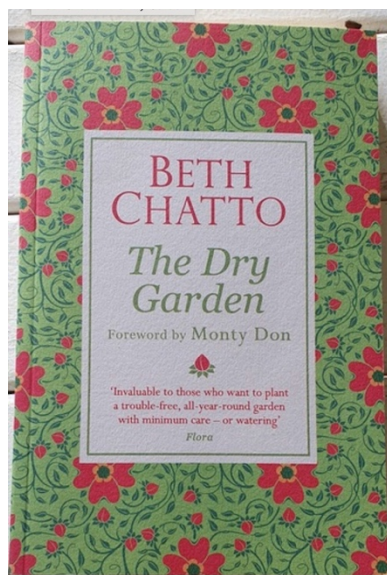
**Avoid the hosepipe & sprinklers** as they're water greedy and often water where you don't need to. Instead, give plants a really good, weekly drenching using a bucket or a watering can.

**Drip Systems;** for large borders or vegetable plots, where running up and down with a watering can could be challenging, consider installing an irrigation system. The best of these are typically 'leaky hoses', snaking across the surface of the border/veg patch. All irrigation systems can be controlled at the tap through the use of a timer, so watering can be done after sunset or well before sunrise to reduce evaporation. Leaky hose and mini sprinkler systems are available mail order from [www.access-irrigation.co.uk](http://www.access-irrigation.co.uk), who also provide a design/advice service.

**Drought-Tolerant Plants;** when restocking a garden, consider planting drought resistant plants. The following websites/links and books will provide advice and plant lists:

The Beth Chatto [www.bethchatto.co.uk](http://www.bethchatto.co.uk)

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) [www.rhs.org](http://www.rhs.org)



**Avoid wasteful use of treated mains water;** in the U.K., the average person uses 146 litres of water a day. The demand for piped water far outstrips that available from reservoirs and rain feeding into local rivers for most of the year. Consequently 85% of the water provided to us by Sutton and East Surrey Water (SESW) comes from chalk aquifers. Report any leaks. A leak on your property it is your responsibility, but SESW may be prepared to undertake the work at no cost through the company's 'Leak Assistance Scheme'. The company also offer free water saving equipment and may repair leaking taps and internal pipework ([www.seswater.co.uk/getwaterfit](http://www.seswater.co.uk/getwaterfit))

**Avoid rainwater from entering the foul drainage system;** the River Mole floods during heavy rainfall and this floodwater often contains our raw sewage because the rainwater from our roofs overloads the foul drainage system. If your house was built after c1960 the rainwater is probably be taken to a soak-

away, and the same should apply to extensions built after this date, although the front roof may still feed into the foul drains. Steps you can take include:

- Installing water butts on drainpipes feeding into the foul drains and use the collected water in your garden.
- Consider running a hose from the open outlet to a well-draining part of the garden and leave the water butt empty during the winter months (the hose should empty at least 5m from any building). The water butt will hold any downpours which will then drain harmlessly away. Close the outlet tap in the late spring when you need to build up a new supply for gardening.
- A 'rain garden' may be appropriate, which is a depression in the garden which takes the rainwater directly, temporarily creating a pool, before the water percolates into the ground.