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A recreational pond like this one at Hampden Farm in Island Creek meanders along the landscape and offers several tranquil spots for relaxing along the banks or in a canoe.

# Fill 'er up? Having your own pond can be rewarding, but it's high-maintenance

Story and photos  
by Sean Clougherty

'It's a lot more  
than just going  
out there and  
digging a hole'

**M**any ponds are used to contain drainage and runoff water from farm land and can also be used as an irrigation source for crops.

They can also be used to attract a variety of wildlife like waterfowl for hunting or to stock with fish.

And there's nothing wrong with having a pond to simply spend time

at, swinging under a tree at the edge or tooling around in a canoe or paddleboat.

For whatever their intended use, experts say regular maintenance is key to keeping them in shape.

If you are considering digging a new pond, choosing the right site is very important.

According to Nick Slayden,

owner of Environmental Contracting in Easton, understanding the soil structure of the intended site will help determine if it is right to keep the pond full of water.

If the pond depth goes past the water table it can continually drain the pond leaving it constantly low or empty in dry years, he says.

Staying above the water table and lining the pond floor with about six to eight inches of clay will act as a seal keeping water in.

“It’s a lot more than just going out there and digging a hole.” Slayden says.

A new pond can be a big undertaking. Slayden says it is not out of the question to have costs reach \$60,000 to \$80,000 on new construction of a pond between one and a half to two acres in size, so having the right place picked out will only help the project go smoothly.

Slayden recommended working with the county’s Soil Conservation District to get information on where a pond would work best on a property.

•*Keeping the water clean*•

A pond that has been let go for several years can need almost as much attention as if starting from scratch.

Rick Schaefer, the eastern regional manager for inland fisheries at Maryland Department of Natural Resources says without regular



Volunteer arum in the Hampden Farm pond adds some color to the water’s edge and habitat for aquatic life.

management, a pond will eventually transform into a boggy marsh.

Over time, many types of veg-

etation will grow in and around the pond and overtake it causing too much shade which can deplete the dissolved oxygen in the water and kill aquatic life.

Sediment pouring in from large rain events will settle to the bottom making it more shallow.

“It already begins its journey to a wetland from day one,” Schaefer says. “That’s just natural succession. That’s the way it works.”

There are a few options that can keep more sediment out of the pond and on the field. Riparian buffers of well-rooted plants like Arum, needle-

With a crop grown to maturity, like corn in this impoundment pond, the area can be refilled with water to attract waterfowl for hunting.



rush and panicum or trees around the pond work well, however with trees, keep in mind the risk of them offering too much shade over the water as they grow taller and larger.

In order to encourage more riparian buffers around water bodies, there are some cost-share opportunities for eligible landowners at the Soil Conservation Districts.

Steve Speilman, soil conservation planner at Talbot Soil Conservation District says by signing up the land around the pond into the Conservation Reserve Program, state and federal funding can pay for up to 87.5 percent of the cost of planting trees around the pond. A smaller percentage is offered for grass buffers since it is a less permanent option,

Speilman says.

Another way to manage runoff and sediment movement is a soil berm with grass or other cover vegetation.

If a pond is in such shape that it needs to be dewatered and deepened, the spoils taken out can be used on site to make the berm, move that Slayden said can ease the permitting process for the project.

“The real push for riparian buffers is for water quality purposes,” Speilman says.

Too much sediment entering the pond can block sunlight getting in and carry nutrients with it into the pond and it can change the pH of the water. The change can spawn algae blooms that also block sunlight

and can lead to a fish kill.

“No property owner wants to see their pond covered in algae, especially if it’s for aesthetic and landscaping purposes,” Slayden says.

One practice Schaefer says pond owners can disregard is throwing a few bales of barley straw in the water to help curb algae growth.

“I’ve not seen that to be the case,” he says of the straw helping. “The stuff really goes anoxic and stinks and really doesn’t do a whole lot in my opinion.”

Schaefer adds that there are products on the market that can help adjust the water’s pH but they require intense monitoring and can easily be overused, leading to more problems. (PAGE 39)



Needlerush, above, and arum are two plants that root well in the soft soils around a pond and help reduce the sediment entering the water.



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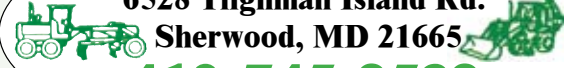
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Know How to Grow ....

## Bleeding Hearts

Story by Kevin George

Incorporating the Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra*) among your collection of shade perennials will appeal to a couple distinct literary personalities.

When in full bloom, one could imagine the striking foliage inspiring either William Shakespeare and Stephen King.

Bleeding hearts are graceful woodland plants that do best in light shade and well-drained soil. Their fern-like foliage appears in early spring, followed by pink or white flowers that are arranged along the stem like little hearts.

"When they're in bloom, they're just magnificent," said Ken Morgan of Robin's Nest Floral & Garden Center in Easton.

A perennial, the Bleeding Hearts will "die back to the ground and come back to the ground" the next season.

Morgan added there are some new varieties, like King of Hearts, which offer later blooms than the April-May window most Bleeding Hearts follow that are now available to home gardeners.

"If I'm not mistaken, that King of Hearts has an extended bloom time," said Morgan, noting it will bloom through mid-summer, a couple months later than most Bleeding Hearts. "That's a brand new one on the market."

Once the colorful blossoms are lost for the season, though, the plant that remains is pretty non-descript.

Home gardeners may wish to coordinate Bleeding Hearts with other plants which bloom at different times in the spring and summer to ensure color in the landscaping.

Morgan said, besides making sure they grow in the

### **Planting tips**

- **Light:** Thrives best in the shade.
- **Soil:** This is a plant for fertile but well-drained soils.
- **Watering:** The blooms will last for a far longer time if the plant is not water-stressed. Reduce the water and the plant will almost immediately stop blooming. It doesn't appreciate swampy conditions though ... the roots will rot.



shade, that Bleeding Hearts need to keep standing water off their roots. "They need good draining soil,"

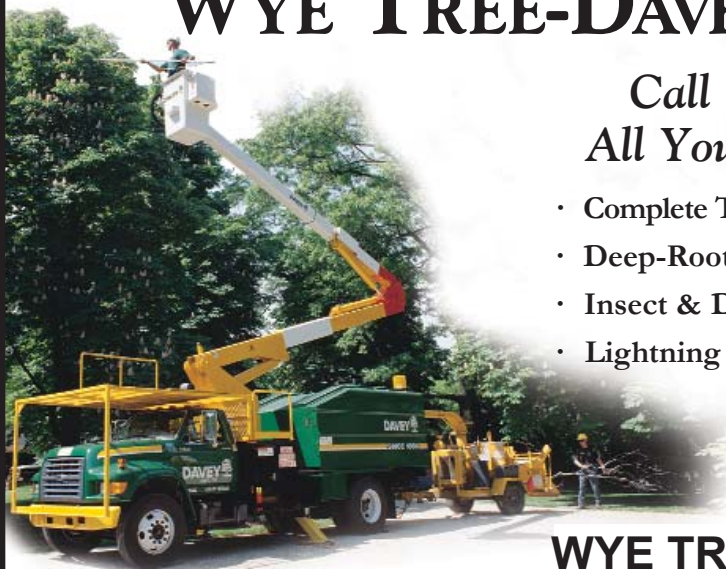
he said. With "wet feet, they'll rot." In landscaping, Bleeding Hearts are usually used in landscaping bor-

ders, but they are also popular in containers and can be used in cut-flower arrangements. ➔

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Pergolas are able to provide a space for a stereo system, outdoor fans, screening neighbors and hanging plant material.

(Photo courtesy Walnut Hill Landscape Company)

# Landscaping made in the shade

If you're looking to add a bit of interest to your landscape (and possibly even provide shade during those hot summer days), look no further — pergolas, arbors and trellises can give your garden, and your home, the boost it needs

Story by  
Stephanie Jordan

Pergolas, arbors and trellises are making appearances in more and more landscapes as people try to enjoy more time outside.

“Pergolas have become popular over the past couple years to provide shade from the dangerous rays of the sun, help define a space by adding height to a flat area, provide an object to attach lighting to light a space and act as a visual feature,” says Mike Prokopchak of Walnut Hill Landscape Company in

Annapolis.

Meredith Watters, of F.A. Hobson Landscaping in Queenstown, says that pergolas can even be used as an extension of the home, essentially creating an outdoor room and helping to shade warm windows (those in a southern exposure).

And in addition to providing a space for lighting, pergolas can even provide a space for a stereo system, outdoor fans, screening neighbors and hanging plant material.

Watters also says more arbors are popping up, as are trellises. Arbors provide an entryway into a garden, making the space very inviting. Arbors add “a lot of wow factor” and even some curb appeal to your home.

Prokopchak says arbors and trellises each have some of the same features as pergolas, with a less cost.

“Arbors are used typically at an entrance to a space to welcome you into the space,” he says. “They too can be used as object for lighting and act as a visual feature.

“Trellises are usually attached to a flat surface to add character to a usually unappealing surface. They are a great surface for attaching climbing vines or other plant material. They can be lit by a light shining up or down.”

How much space do you need to have so that you can install one of these structures? Well, that depends, says Louis Ewing of Ewing Land Works in Easton. A trellis needs very little space; if you are installing an arbor, you need about four feet of space. And small pergola would be 10 feet by 10 feet, and can be much larger, so make sure you have a good-sized area.

An added bonus for a trellis or arbor: They can be moved easily and expanded, while a pergola is more of a permanent element. But overall, all

three structures serve as complements to a patio or adding to the outdoor “living space,” providing shade that is “more attractive than an awning,” Ewing says.

#### •The cost factor•

So how much can you expect to spend on one of these new features for your landscape?

Like anything else, the materials you choose can influence how much your going to pay. Pressure-treated wood, cedar, vinyl and synthetic materials such as Azec are available to use in construction. And the material you choose will be determined by the look you want and how much time you’re willing to spend maintaining the feature.

If you use synthetic materials, you’re going to pay two to three times the price of cedar. But the good news

— there’s virtually no maintenance involved, Watters says.

Want the more rustic look? Choose cedar. But buyer beware: You’ll have to replace rotten wood, as well as, repaint it over the course of three to five years.

Prokopchak says as for the cost of the actual structures, depending on the materials used and its size, pergolas can cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000; arbors range from \$3,500 and \$7,000; and trellises typically cost between \$250 and \$1,500.

Prices will be on the lower end of the scale if you choose a smaller structure with less expensive materials, as well as if you have chosen simple craftsmanship, Ewing says. The more complicated and intricate it is, the more expensive it will be (and the longer it will take to install).



If you hire a professional, depending on size and materials, pergolas can take between one and three weeks to install, like this one put in by Ewing Land Works.

(Photo by Stephanie Jordan)

Want to cut down on the cost by doing it yourself? There are pre-fabricated kits available, so you can put it together yourself.

Just make sure there are complete instructions detailing installation procedures.

Watters recommends having pergolas installed professionally once the structure gets to be a certain size. Once it becomes a very large structure, someone will need to figure out its weight-bearing ability.

*•Good things come to those who wait•*

If you hire a professional, Prokopchak says, depending on size and materials, pergolas can take between one and three weeks to install; arbors can take between one and three days; and trellises typically take less than one day.

Do-it-yourselfers can expect it to take a bit longer.



This pergola of painted wood in Centreville serves as an extension of the home.

(Photo F.A. Hobson Landscaping)

And for those of you who want to establish a plant on your new pergola, arbor or trellis (depending on the plant and the structure), you could be waiting awhile. According to Prokopchak, (PAGE 56)

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