

# garden for life

## Ponds for dragonflies



Blue-tailed damselfly, David Kitching

**Dragonflies and damselflies need fresh water, so having even a small pond in your garden can attract these beautiful insects to live there.**

Like many insects, populations of dragonflies in the UK have crashed in recent times. They need water as the larvae of all species spend most of their lives under the surface. However it has been estimated that over the past 100 years, more than one million ponds have been filled in! With fewer ponds, dragonflies desperately need our help.

### Plants for ponds

Dragonflies don't eat vegetation and so aren't too fussy about the plants in the pond. However getting the planting right can really help make it more attractive to dragonflies. This is because adult dragonflies use plants, leaves, rotten wood, other debris and mud in and around the water to lay their eggs. Their young then spend most of their lives (from a few months to several years) beneath water as larvae which feed upon small animals. Having the right plants can create a small underwater worlds with plenty of food for the larvae.

**Around the pond margins** you can grow plants which like wet soil. Try Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Globeflower (*Trollius*), Yellow Flag Iris, Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpiodes*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and sedges such as *Carex elata*, *Carex pendula* and *Carex pseudocyperus*.

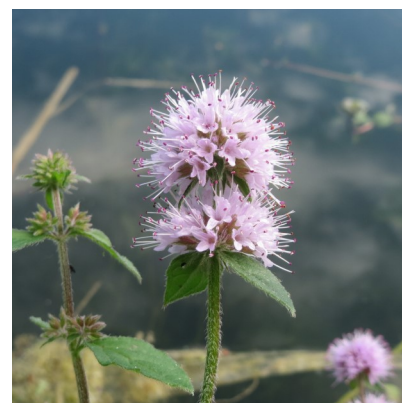
**Submerged plants** are those which grow through the water. Dragonflies can lay their eggs on these, and the larvae can feed upon the other water creatures which live among their leaves. Some of these plants are good **oxygenators**, producing oxygen to help keep the pond life alive. Native plants in this group include Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), Curled Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) and Common Water-Crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*)

As some dragonflies lay their eggs on rotten wood, it is a good idea to have one or two bits of wood protruding from the edge of the water.

The other side of this leaflet has a design for a perfect pond and tips for attracting more dragonflies and other minibeasts



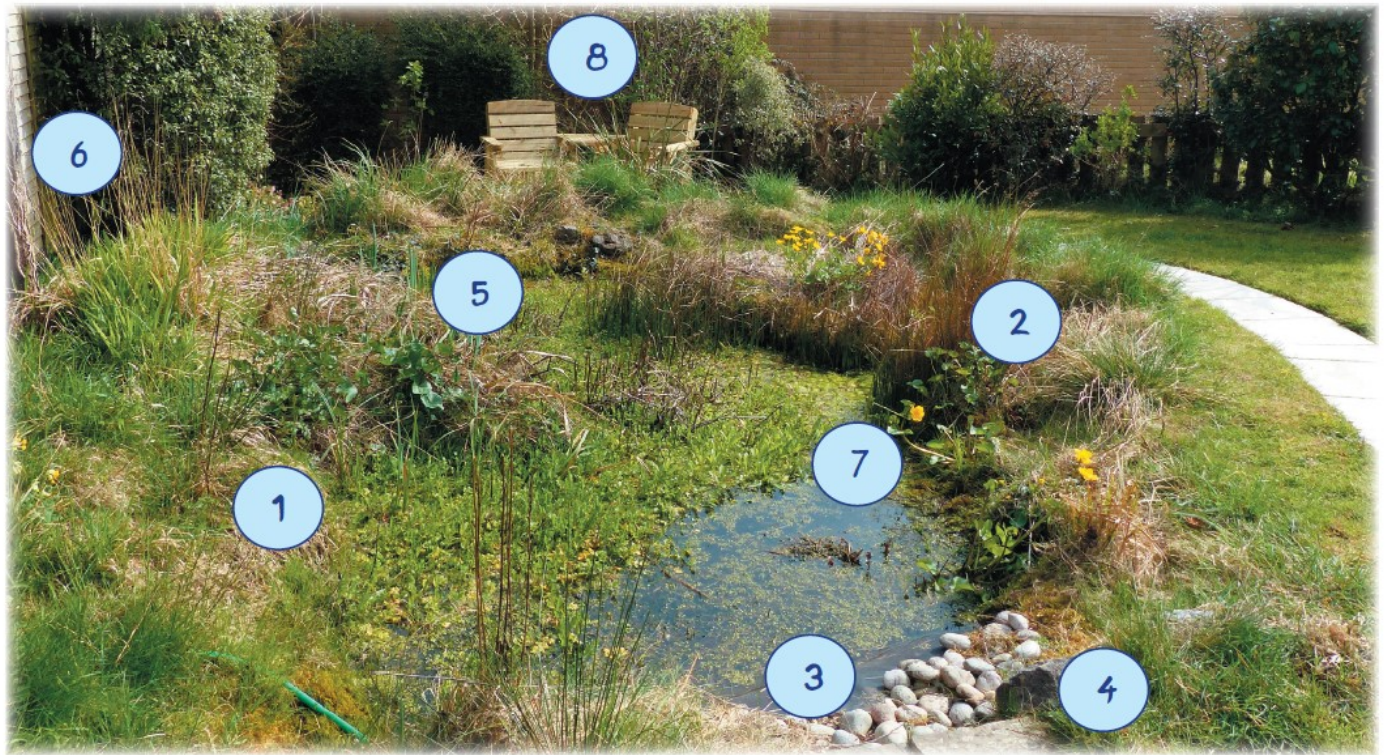
**garden for life**



Water Mint (top) by Andreas Rockstein and  
Yellow Flag Iris by Phil Sellens



# Here's a great garden pond!



- 1) Gently Sloping sides and undulating outline
- 2) Emergent vegetation for emerging larvae and perching and egg-laying adults
- 3) Submerged vegetation for larvae
- 4) Bankside rocks, moss and stones for basking
- 5) Shallow areas to the sides, deep in the middle
- 6) Nearby sunlit wood and hedges for shelter
- 7) Areas of open water for larvae and egg-laying adults
- 8) As area to sit and enjoy your pond!

**The bigger the pond, the better!** You can also create several small ponds if you have the space, and you might different dragonflies in these ponds.

## Dragonfly or damselfly?

Dragonflies tend to have robust bodies and strong flight. They hold their wings open when they are at rest. Damselflies have thin, delicate bodies and weak flight. They close their wings along their bodies when they are at rest.

Visit [www.british-dragonflies.org.uk](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk) for more information.



Common Blue Damselfly, David Kiching



Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Paul Ritchie

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