

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Improving Garden Space with a Waterscape”*

We all need a new project on our to-do list, right? The answer is absolutely! We wouldn't want to get bored, and it might as well be a project that will enhance your garden space and attract birds and pollinators. That project? Let's consider adding a water element to our gardens.

Preliminary research suggests the presence of water in a natural space can benefit mental well-being. The sound of running water helps reduce noise pollution and provides a relaxing escape. Water attracts birds and other pollinators, which contributes to positive well-being. Whether a bubbling rock, pond or waterfall, sensory interests are piqued by waterscapes in the landscape.

Maybe you don't have room in the budget or a lot of time for a big project. That's okay. Water features don't have to be large and complex, making it a great weekend project. They can be made from a simple container, water trough or large flower pot to hold water. There are a plethora of fountain and pond designs that will fit into any size garden.

Consider accessibility, interactivity and maintenance when deciding how to incorporate a therapeutic water feature into your landscape. An isolated water feature can become a destination where visitors may venture to seek refuge. However, it loses efficacy if it is too inconvenient to access it. Try positioning a water feature close to pathways frequented regularly so more people can enjoy the benefits, making it easier to monitor the feature for maintenance concerns. It's hard to enjoy your new waterscape if it requires intense maintenance. Don't let your calming feature become a stress-inducer.

The sound created by the movement of the water creates a calming effect. Depending on the type of feature, it may be possible to allow play in the waterscape. Consider adding stepping stones up to the feature, but always consider safety and follow necessary precautions when adding a water feature to the landscape. It's good to consider who will be enjoying this new feature. Perhaps elderly grandparents that we don't want to fall when maneuvering around the space. Or small children who have a chance of drowning or severely injuring themselves in a space not designed with their safety in mind.

Information comes from Kansas State University horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini.