

**Is my pond safe?**



**Young children**

There is always some risk when young children are left unsupervised beside water – of any depth. This could be at the seaside, by a river in the countryside, in the bath at home, and beside garden water features. Teaching children to appreciate the value and potential dangers of water as they grow up will make them more aware of any risks, but this cannot eliminate the dangers. Statistics suggest that the most vulnerable tend to be toddlers visiting unfamiliar gardens – that could include visitors to your own garden.

**Safer pond design**

Whether for children or adults, it makes sense to build in good design to minimise potential problems. Make sure that the pond surrounds are firm. Any loose, slippery or rocking paving should be repaired, if necessary using larger slabs that are more stable. Avoid having very narrow paths around confined pools. Build in stepped planting shelves, rather than sloping the pond steeply to the base. This makes it easier for anyone to clamber out of the pond if they get in deliberately or by accident.

**Keeping children out**

Although raised ponds are inherently less likely to be tripped and fallen into, this is not a barrier to inquisitive children. A net or simple mesh cover is an ineffective barrier and could actually be more dangerous if anyone falling in became entangled. The only sure ways to keep children out are either to fit some style of strong metal grid over and above the pool (capable of supporting a child's weight), or to securely fence off the part of the garden with the pond behind a childproof gate. When the children have grown old enough, the grid or fence can be removed.

Self-contained features are possible where the reservoir is safely hidden, often below ground, and little if any depth of water is visible. This is a good option for a child friendly garden.

**Electrics**

Pond equipment has various safety features built in, such as double insulation, earthing cables and overheating cut-outs. Most pond lighting systems are low-voltage. However, it is important to ensure that all equipment is correctly installed, with cable protection where required, waterproof joins, weatherproof switches/sockets, a suitable fuse and an RCD safety-trip. Contact a specialist if you are in any doubt.

You should always turn off or disconnect mains electrical equipment before working in the pond, and dry your hands before handling plugs and switches. Mains power pool pumps are not to be used within swimming ponds.

**Hygiene**

A well-maintained pond usually has healthy water with minimal disease risk. Nevertheless, wash your hands after working in or around your pond, and before handling any food. Wear protective gloves especially where scratches or wounds might become exposed to the water. Avoid leaving any fish foods outside that might attract unwanted animals.

Fine spray fountains and splashing ornaments can on rare occasions harbour harmful bacteria, especially where the water is regularly above 20 degrees C, e.g. in a conservatory. Controls include the use of suitable water treatments and/or a UV/filter unit, which we can fit.