

Educator Notes:

Creating a frog-friendly habitat



Learning and engagement approach

- This activity is designed to engage young learners from 7-13.
- The activity is intended to:
 - Raise awareness of the threats frogs are facing in the wild including disease, habitat loss, climate change and introduced species
 - Highlight frogs as environmental indicators
 - Encourage young learners to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for wildlife
 - Empower young learners to design, plan for and construct a frog-friendly habitat
 - Model environmental values
 - Demonstrate that our actions can help or hurt the environment
 - Reinforce Junior Landcarers' care for the environment
- The construction phase will need to be facilitated by an adult
- There is an assumption that young learners undertaking this activity will have some prior knowledge and understanding of the following:
 - Junior Landcare
 - Habitats
 - Frogs
 - Survival needs: food, water, shelter, air, space to raise their young
 - Food webs
 - Environmental indicators

Safety and regulations

Investigate ponds in other schools, especially safety management ideas that are used. Some schools install a metal grill under the water surface, while others locate the ponds in a well fenced off 'natural area'. Other ideas include making a very shallow frog bog or pond and placing it in a frequently used area where everyone can see what's going on.

Find out more about your local council's requirements before you plan to start. It would also help talking to your Department of Education Office or nearby Catholic Education Office to find out more about any specific regulations they might have. Ask questions about the size, depth and the recommended location of school ground water features.

Create a boundary around the pond with a low fence, log seating or large rocks. Talk about 'How to be safe around the pond' and publicise safety precautions with signage nearby.

Selecting the right site

Explore the direction of water flows in the schoolyard or yard, preferably after it has rained. The ideal location for the pond may be where runoff naturally accumulates. Another source of water to consider is water that could be used from downpipes. Try to ensure that the pond site will not receive any excess nutrients from runoff, such as areas below sports fields.



Considerations when choosing a SITE for your frog-friendly habitat:

- Select an area that receives part shade and part sun during the day.
- Away from existing large trees. This will avoid falling leaves entering the pond and tree root interference.
- If at home, away from the house – as frogs can be noisy!
- Choose a location where water naturally pools.
- Surrounded by vegetation, logs or rocks so the frogs can hide from predators.
- Near a compost heap or flower garden if you have one, so there are insects nearby.

Considerations when creating a frog-friendly HABITAT:

- If your site is lacking native vegetation, plant grasses, plants, ground cover and/or shrubs of different heights around the pond to provide hiding spots from predators and shelter from wind. Plants will also attract insects to your pond.
- Create a rock pile or log pile adjacent to the pond to provide shelter and shade.

Considerations when constructing a frog-friendly POND:

- Ideally shallow with sloping sides so the frogs can easily enter and exit the pond.
- If digging your own pond, line with a tough, commercially-produced pond liner to provide structure and to prevent water loss. Wash down with clean water before using.
- If you are unable to source water from a local natural water body use tap water. The water needs to be free of chemicals. Let tap water stand for 1 week before adding living things to the pond.
- Children's wading pools, laundry tubs, bathtubs and styrofoam boxes can also be used to create a frog pond. If using a container, build a ramp from logs, rocks, sand or gravel to lessen the slope, so the frogs can climb in and out easily.
- Decide whether to have an 'overflow' pond area for excess rainwater. The overflow pond is built below the height of the main pond, and allows for water to move to the overflow pond in case of heavy rain.
- Select appropriate indigenous aquatic plants for your pond. Some might float while others might grow tall out of the water. Ask at your local indigenous plant nursery, landcare group or council for advice.