



By Michele Godlevski

Photos by author except where noted

Have you ever spent money rehabilitating your dog only to be told you were not doing enough conditioning? Ever showed up at a local pond only to find garbage, fishhooks, and strange-colored water? Ever bring your dog home smelling like algae or have your dog get sick after swimming in public water? I have done all that, and each time, I spent the car ride home dreaming of the day when I'd have my own pond. It has now been a year since I made that dream into a reality. I share the pond with my clients and friends in Youngsville, North Carolina, and it has been almost more popular than my agility ring as a rental. I've had so many people ask me for my "recipe" for a good doggie swimming pond, I thought I'd share it.

The first step was choosing the spot. We have some natural springs on our property and also a small stream. This made it possible to have a freshwater source. I hired an excavating contractor to build a dam. (Note: In some areas of the country, this may require a permit.)



The final size of our pond is 100' long by 60' wide. Outside the pond area, the contractor found a natural spring and dug a well. We set up a submersible pump inside the well with an external on/off switch and piping to the pond.

Next we put landscaping cloth down along the bank where the dogs would run and play. On top of the landscaping cloth we put recycled rubber drainage matting. I used landscaping pins to secure it to the ground and cable ties to bind the rubber mats together. This setup allows wet dogs to drain and keeps them from getting muddy.



After we filled the pond, I used barley straw extract to help the sediment float to the bottom. This is a natural product that is safe for dogs. Then I added PondKeep Oxygen Keeper and BioBlack colorant. BioBlack prevents algae and bacteria from growing and gives the water a dark purple, reflective appearance. It is commonly used in reflecting ponds and is safe for dog (and human) consumption. Both products are available from www.microbeliftstore.com on the Internet or your local pond supply or landscaping store. Once the pond was established, I replenished the BioBlack every four months.



Note that using BioBlack means that no plant life will grow in your pond, which means no fish and no birds as well.

These were intended benefits from my perspective, as they meant that there would not be bird excrement on the deck, and the water would not smell or attract snakes. I also added extra snake-preventive measures that I am proud to say have been 99% effective. I put deer netting along the bottom of the fence

around the perimeter of the pond. Any snake that has tried to cross the fence gets caught in the netting. The only intruder I've had was a 3" baby mud snake that was so small he made it through. I threw him out and he never made it back in again.

But there are creatures that still exist in the pond. The tadpoles and frogs love it, because it is a safe, snake-free haven. There are also fresh water snails and water bugs.



With any rental, we need pond rules. I have them posted outside the gate. Our rentals are online, so the renter gets the rules at the time of rental as well.

I also divided the pond in half with a floating swim line so that each half (Picnic Side and Dock Side) can be rented out separately. On the deck I have iron gates that hold the swim line. I have seen dogs swim under or over the swim line, but for the most part, it gives dogs some separation from one another, especially if they have problems with having other dogs close by.



I can definitely report that my dogs have enjoyed the pond and benefited from it greatly. We open it up for trials and have had rave reviews from competitors. For more information, please see www.TeamworksDogTraining.com.



© *Stewart Event Images*