

Create your own bog garden



Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

LAURIE CAMPBELL

▲ **Common Valerian** (*Valeriana officinalis*)

Description: A medium height plant of around 1m, with clusters of small pink flowers produced from June to August.

Growing conditions: Happy in sunny or shady spots and from the edge of the water through to damp grassland.

Native range: Throughout Scotland.

► **Pendulous Sedge** (*Carex pendula*)

Description: An architectural treat, with the long sedge flowers forming a delicate arch at the pond side, up to 2m tall.

Growing conditions: Widely available as a plug plant or larger for direct planting into the bog garden. Prefers clay soils.

Native range: Across the Central Belt and scattered locations along the north east coast.

Keeping control

Many bog garden plants will establish quickly, and you might find that one or two species start to take over. Thin out, gently, if necessary during the summer and autumn, and then have a good clearance session early the following spring. Add these thinnings to your compost heap. This will allow room for the less dominant species to keep growing, and give you space to add new species if you fancy a bit more variety.



Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*)

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Put yourself in the frog's shoes

The bog garden provides a crucial link between the pond and the surrounding dry land for many animal and plant species, as well as being a natural visual feast for humans. If you think about your garden from the perspective of a frog (or a dragonfly, or a shrew) you will start to work out whether you have enough feeding, travelling and hiding places for the varied wildlife. The colourful and attractive flowers of the bog garden plants will also prove popular with more traditional terrestrial invertebrates such as butterflies and bumblebees.

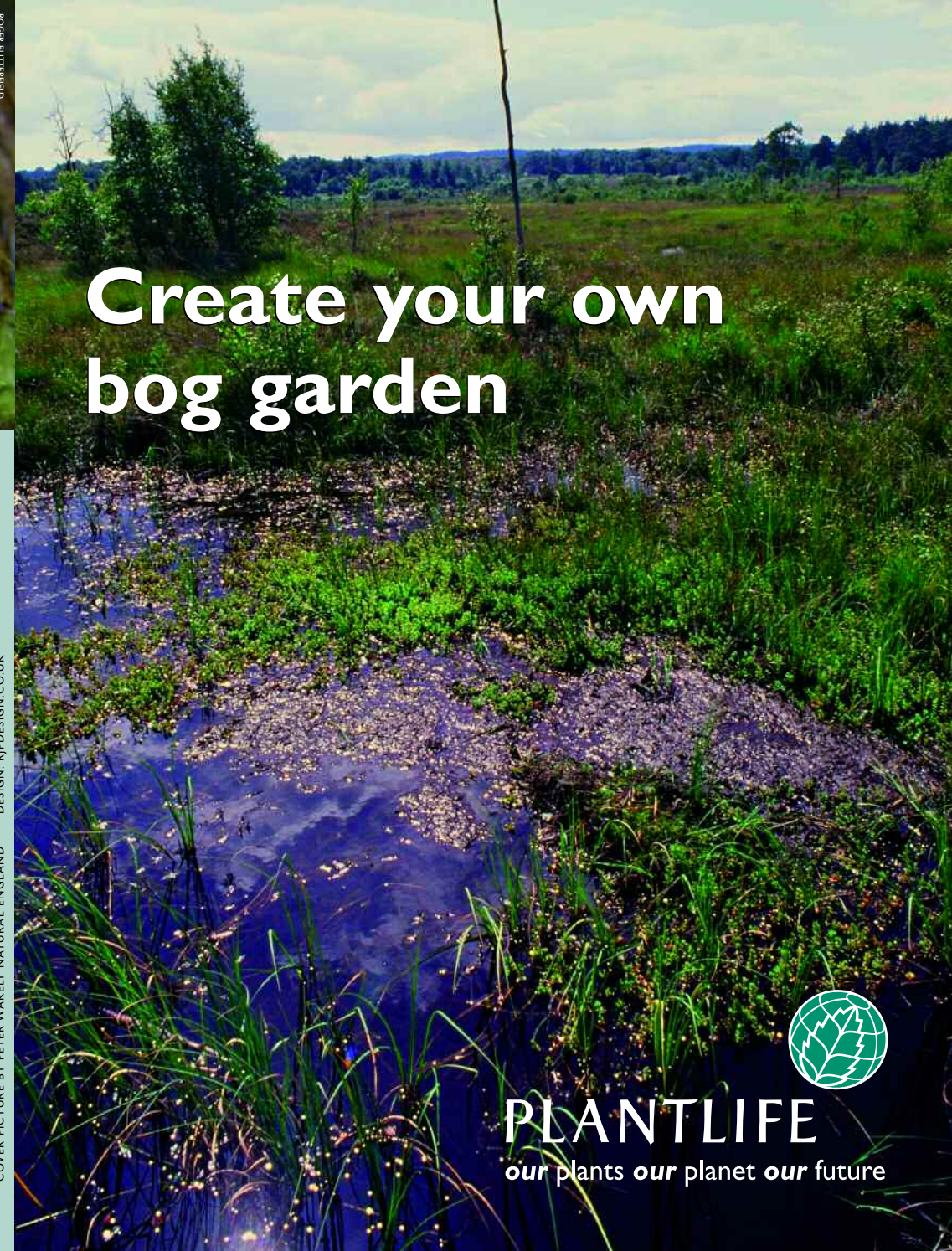


Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)

ROGER BUTTERFIELD

Pond Alert!

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DESIGN: R/PDESIGN.CO.UK

COVER PICTURE BY PETER WAKELY NATURAL ENGLAND



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Create your own bog garden

A pond on its own is good, but making a bog garden alongside your pond can really add to the appeal your garden has for local wildlife.

When to start your bog garden

The best time of year to start creating a bog garden is in the autumn. Most of the animals that live in and around the pond should have left for the winter and the soil will still have some warmth but not too much water in it, so will be easier to work. The new bog garden area will then have the winter to settle down and water can collect before the growing season begins in the spring.

Where to put your bog garden

Choose which side of the pond you would like to develop for your bog garden. This will depend on your garden layout, taking into account the location of flower beds and paths. It is sensible, and makes life easier, to pick an area where water generally lies during rainy periods. You can also decide whether to have a little island area between the pond and bog

garden or a smooth gradient from the water out to the dryer area.

Dig shallow

Mark out the area for the bog garden and lift off the soil to a depth of 20cm. Make sure the edges of the area are level, using pegs and a spirit level. Prepare the ground as you would for the pond itself, removing any stones or other debris and, ideally, pre-lining the area with sand and old carpet or newspapers as a protective underlay. Then add your standard butyl liner, making sure it overlaps with the pond liner so that any overflow water from the pond can soak into the bog garden. Puncture the liner a few times with a garden fork, to allow some very slow drainage to take place, as this will mimic natural bog conditions.

Refill the area with soil (not topsoil), and some more sand if possible. As with the pond itself, you don't want too many nutrients in the bog area or it will soon become overgrown with

nettles and docken. With the liner in place, the area should become waterlogged naturally over the winter, ready for some moisture loving plants to be added in the spring.

Good bog species to use

The really fun part of a bog garden is choosing the species to plant. Many native species for this habitat have colourful flowers or interesting architectural structure. As well as being great for wildlife, your bog can be an eye-catching part of the garden for human visitors too.

Some species to consider using are:

▼ Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

Description: Clusters of yellow flowers, in April and May, giving strong spring colour, attractive leaves – hand sized and heart shaped. Grows in manageable clumps, 30-40cm high.

Growing conditions: Plant in a clump at the side of the pond. Grows in sun or shade and doesn't need to be contained in a basket. This is a well-behaved plant, but if there is too much you can pull some out during the summer.

Native range: Widespread throughout Scotland.



Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*)

▲ Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*)

Description: Produces spikes of pink flowers, in July and August, with long and pointed leaves. The plant can reach a stately 1.5m tall.

Growing conditions: Plant one or two plants in the mud at the side of the pond. Grows very quickly and thinning out by dividing into clumps in spring or autumn may be necessary. Prefers neutral or slightly alkali soils.

Native range: Throughout central and southern Scotland.

▼ Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Description: Another striking plant, up to 1.2m tall with spikes of stunning purple flowers in July and August. A real attraction for many insect species.

Growing conditions: Grows in sun or partial shade and doesn't mind if the ground dries out a bit.

Native range: Argyll, the Central Belt and south-west Scotland.

► Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*)

Description: Growing to 50cm in height, this plant produces delightfully tattered looking pink-purple flowers from May to August.

Growing conditions: Will grow from seed or as a plug plant, in sun or semi-shade. Can also grow on damp grassland and be cut as part of a summer meadow, so gives an option for extending the bog garden into a grassland habitat, or even wet woodland areas.

Native range: Widespread throughout southern and central Scotland, and all but the highest ground in the north.



Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*)

▼ Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*)

Description: A dainty harbinger of the new growing season, with pale pink flowers (March to June) which attract the orange-tip butterfly. Grows up to 60cm tall.

Growing conditions: Grows well in sun or partial shade and can also be part of a damp spring meadow.

Native range: Throughout Scotland.



Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)



Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)



Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*)