

Water Stones Add Accent

home & garden

Water stones are a handsome addition to the home landscape and evidence of an interest in the current ecological - environment crisis, says Joe Cox, Michigan State University extension landscape architect.

Water stones are glacial boulders with the top hollowed out. Rain water collects there and supplies water to birds and other wildlife.

Many forms of wildlife learn to depend on the stones for their water needs, and it should be continuously supplied, except in winter when abundant snow serves the same purpose.

To prevent the buildup of algae in the free standing water, periodic cleaning is required.

Mosses, lichens and some native Michigan wildflowers will usually grow near the site of a water stone oasis.

Rocks used for water stones must be of the non-porous type which will hold water. An absorbing rock will deteriorate during periods of freezing and thawing.

Over a long period of time, rocks tend to settle into the soil, especially if it is of high clay content. To overcome this, place gravel under the water stone.

It does, however, give a

permanent and stable appearance if at least one-fifth of the rock volume is below grade. Companion stones

may be placed at different depths to add variety to the composition.

When placing the stones

study alternative positions to see which composition or placement will best fit your landscape.

Make the most of shadow patterns on the rocks themselves so that contrasts of lights and darks will reveal

weight, stability, and rugged beauty. Study the relationship of the rocks to existing trees, slopes, water courses, shrubs and evergreens to permit maximum function and aesthetic beauty.

"When moving natural glacial boulders, use nylon or fiber ropes and belts rather than iron chains," suggests Cox. "Abrasions and nicks on these stones will spoil the naturalness you are seeking."

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