

# ROCK PILE

Creating habitats for amphibians and reptiles in your yard



## Materials

- Rocks of varying size
- Demolished concrete of varying size
- PVC pipes
- Clay drain tile

Estimated Cost  
\$0-\$150

## Tools

- Wheelbarrow
- Gloves
- Hoe
- Some moderate physical labor



While building your habitat be sure to comply with all local regulations and be safe.

## Steps

1. Start with the largest rocks on the bottom of the stack to create hiding places between rocks. Dig small holes under large flat rocks to create moist hiding places for frogs and salamanders.
2. Add tunnels and entrances at the base of the pile with clay drain tile or pieces of PVC pipe.
3. Next add rocks and stones of different shapes and sizes to the pile. Arrange the rock pile in a way that creates nooks and crannies.
4. Once wildlife become established, it is recommended to enjoy them from a distance, both for your and the animals' health and safety.

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## Location

- Place your rock pile in a mostly sunny area. An area that gets sun in the morning and shade in the late afternoon will work as well. If you have a south-facing slope, this is an ideal location to attract and observe these critters during the Spring and Fall.
- Rock piles can stand-alone or be used as a border for your flowerbeds. The closest cover should also influence your choice of location. A lizard or frog that has to travel across open ground is vulnerable to predators like birds, cats, dogs and other animals.
- Placing your rock pile alongside a water feature is beneficial to frogs that can leap into the water to escape, and placing a rock pile along the border of a flower garden can give lizards the cover needed to protect them.

## Materials and Cost

- When thinking about your rock pile materials, please be sure to be environmentally conscious. Using natural stone looks great, but if you are destroying one natural habitat to create an artificially constructed habitat, then there is a net loss.
- Rocks can be purchased at your local gardening or landscape center (~\$150/ton). However, consider using busted up concrete that can often be free at construction sites. These can be landscaped with native plants or painted with non-toxic paint to keep them from looking unsightly.
- Be sure to choose rocks of different shapes and sizes. Larger rocks will allow for more in-between spaces.
- Short pieces of clay drain tile or PVC, used for underground tunnels, are inexpensive (less than \$5). They can often also be collected (for free!) from friends and family that have them lying about.
- **Important:** PVC should never be planted vertically in the ground. It creates a space that many animals cannot escape from and become death traps.

## Beautifying Your Rock Pile

- Add soil and plant native plants in some of the nooks
- Add a tree limb to your rock pile so that it sticks out about the rocks for additional interest and lizard basking habitat
- Place flat rocks on top of your pile and use as a place to set container plants or garden ornaments
- Paint some of your rocks with non-toxic paint to add some color