

Habitat Rock Piles

Rock piles are especially appealing to some of the smaller wildlife species we share our world with, such as:

- toads
- salamanders
- lizards
- snakes
- turtles
- many invertebrate species including spiders and crickets

Although some people don't like these critters, many of them do a great job of controlling more pesky critters like garden-damaging insects and rodents.

Cold-blooded animals like rock piles because the stones "hold" heat and cold longer than the air around it. A rock warmed up by the sun will stay warm most of the night. They also stay cooler during the heat of the day. The area near a rock pile also tends to stay moist, which some creatures prefer.

How to Construct a Rock Pile for Wildlife

First of all, use a diversity of rock sizes. The pile can simply be placed on top of the ground.

For a better habitat, you can dig a hole in the ground, allowing more space for larger fauna, like toads, to hide in. At the bottom of the hole, place large rocks, cinder blocks, ceramic flower pots, or old clay drainage tiles. A length of pipe at the base can create a handy tunnel as depicted in the following illustration.

Try to layer the rocks in a way that allows for different shapes and sizes of crevices that the animals can access. Above the ground, use smaller rocks mixed in with bigger ones.

The rock pile can be incorporated into a rock garden or left as a landscape feature on its own. If the idea of a rock pile would not fit in with your landscape, a stone fence or upside-down flower pots can also create habitat for reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.

It may take several years for the pile to be "discovered" and put to use by wildlife in your area. Do not disturb the pile once built.

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/habitat_in_the_backyard_part_2_rock_on

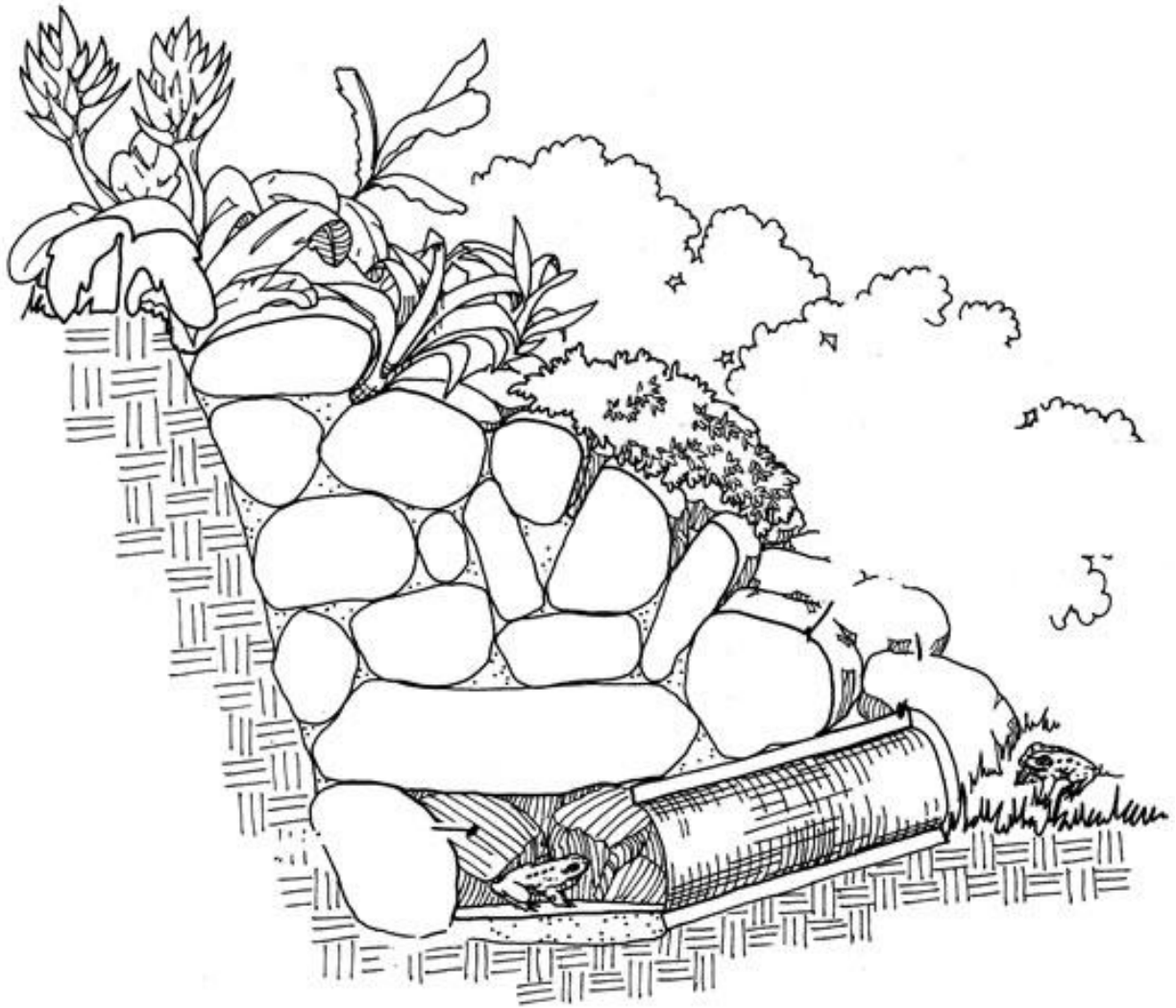


Illustration from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snakes.html>