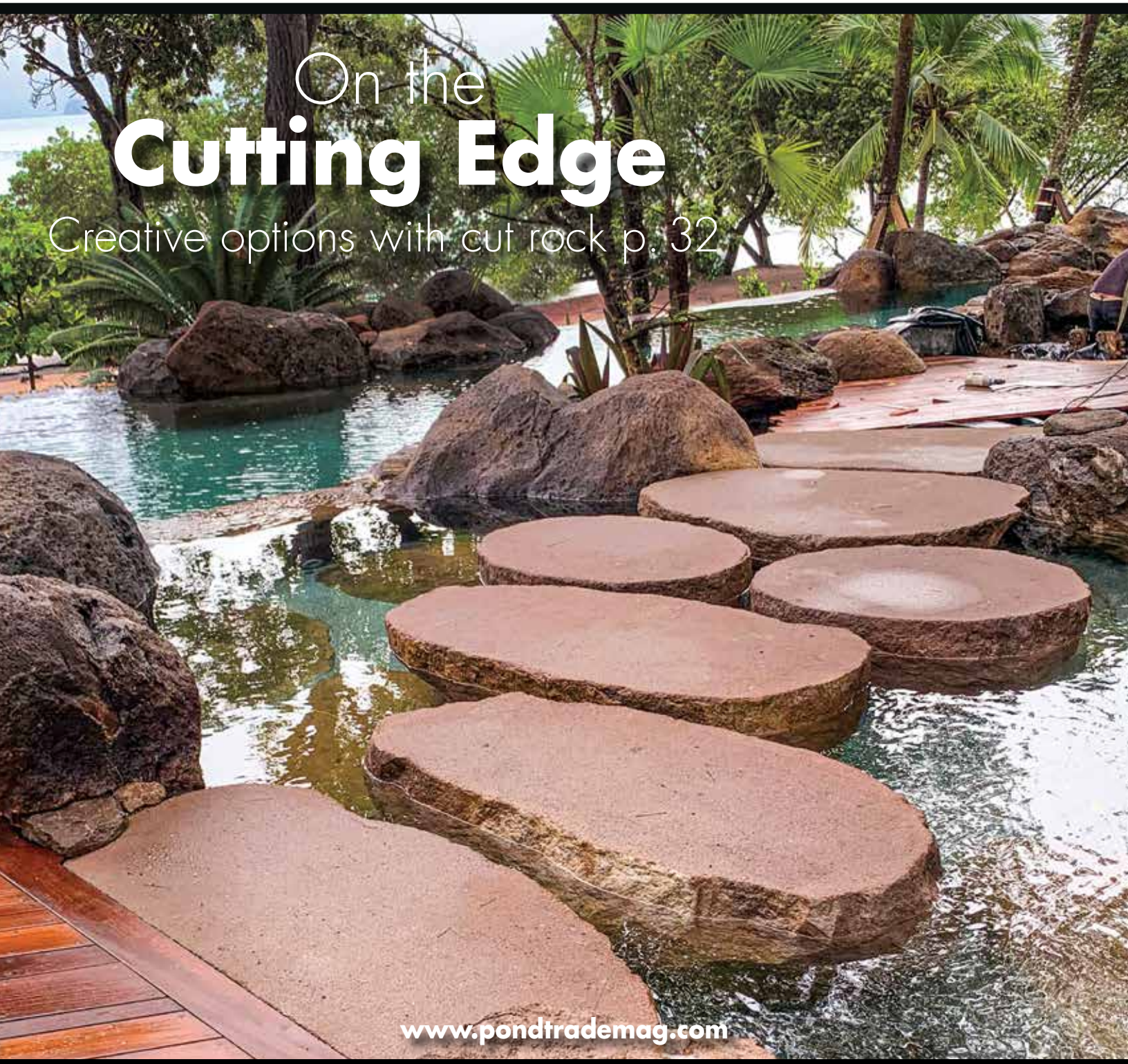
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On the Cutting Edge

Creative options with cut rock p. 32

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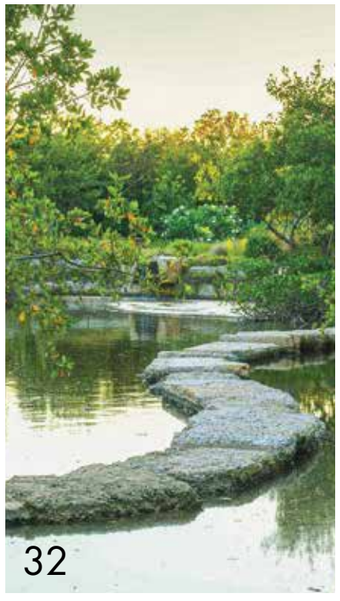
Volume 30 | Issue 1

January/February **2025**









FEATURES

8 **An Ecological Escape** POND CONSTRUCTION

Ryan Farnol recounts a build where the combination of a pond, streams and waterfalls created a serene atmosphere to escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The project also showcases the importance of creating wildlife-friendly environments.



17 **Oh, the Places You'll Go!**

Are you familiar with the essential components of an effective marketing strategy? Check out **Laura Reale**'s strategic roadmap for growing your email marketing program and learn why it's likely crucial to your long-term success.

21 **Flat Lining**

Custom fitting an EPDM liner provides a completely different finish and is perfect for clients looking for a cross between a swimming pool and a swimming pond. The result is definitely worth the effort, according to **Jeff Knox**.



41

26 **Mile-High Masterclass**

In this recap of the 2024 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference (APC) in Denver, **Demi Fortuna** details the day-to-day docket of the popular industry event focused on education and networking.

32 **On the Cutting Edge** COVER STORY

When you think of cut rock, your mind may instantly go to straight lines and sharp corners. That doesn't have to be the case, writes **Dave Duensing**. Learn how to leverage the art of cutting rock to enhance any water feature.

41 **Let's Be Pond-mates** LANGUAGE OF KOI

Have you tried having goldfish and koi together in the same pond? The results can be rewarding for both pond owners and retailers, according to Blackwater Creek Koi Farm's **Rick Gann**.

45 **And Now For Something Completely Different**

Kole Loveday, whom you might know in the industry as "Koi Boy," tells the story of the first installation of the PolyPond — an innovative, cost-effective pond-building method with a surprising number of potential applications.

51 **The Thrill of the Hunt**

The W. Lim Corporation has elevated the international koi trade with its introduction of the All-American Koi Show. **Stephen Tuazon** takes us to Japan, where American contractors can be found scrounging for future award-winners.

DEPARTMENTS

6 **Upcoming Events**
54 **Trade News**
56 **Marketplace**
57 **Advertisers' Index**

COLUMNS

7 **Publisher's Perspective**

Upcoming **Events**

2025

January 5 - 7
Koi Club of San Diego Koi Show
Delmar Fairgrounds
Delmar, California
www.koiclubofsandiego.org/Koi-Show-2025

January 8 - 10
MANTS
Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, Maryland
www.mants.com

March 3 - 4
Advanced Swim Pond Construction Build
Lindley residence
Kreps, Oklahoma
https://form.jotform.com/pondprosalliance/wge-group-build-registration

March 5 - 7
Water Garden Expo
Firelake Grand Casino Hotel
Shawnee, Oklahoma
www.wgexpo.com

March 7 - 9
Central Florida Koi and Goldfish Show
Avanti Palms Resort
Orlando, Florida
www.cfks.org

March 18 - 20
National Hardware Show
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, Neveda
www.nationalhardwareshow.com

March 29 - 30
All-American Koi Show Las Vegas
Silverton Hotel and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.allamericankoishow.com

August 23
Koi Fest 2025
Fitz's Fish Pond Farm
Milford, New Jersey

October 22 - 24
Hardscapes North America
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Publisher's Perspective

Happy New Year!

Weee-oh! Another year has come and gone. Hopefully you've had a great year with a long list of fantastic completed projects you are proud of. What a feeling of accomplishment to look back at what you've done and, while you're at it, think of how you could have done some things better. As with anything you do, there's always room for bettering yourself. Heck, that's why POND Trade has so many readers! People love to see what other professionals have done, learn from it and apply it in their own projects.



We are excited for 2025 and some of the big changes coming down the pike for our POND Trade publication. You'll definitely want to stay tuned!

As always, we are rich in content to start off the new year. As you can see on our cover, we are thrilled to welcome back Dave Duensing — a Big Kahuna in our industry — to write about the art of cutting rocks ("On the Cutting Edge," pg. 32). I love how he dispels the myth about the limitations of cut rocks and showcases some jaw-dropping examples of how this art form can be applied to many different building styles.

Speaking of building styles, if you're a pond contractor, you might be especially interested in two of this issue's articles. "Flat Lining" by Jeff Knox (pg. 21) explores the method of custom-fitting a large EPDM liner — a tactic that takes a lot of effort, but the reward can be extremely satisfying. "Koi Boy" Kole Loveday, a first-time writer with us, has a profile on the PolyPond ("And Now For Something Completely Different," pg. 45) — a more cost-effective construction method that also can have eyebrow-raising results.

We're also giving a little love to the goldfish this issue ("Let's Be Pond-Mates," pg. 41) with Rick Gann's Language of Koi installment, which reveals how to monetize the koi-goldfish cohabitation situation. Finally, Laura Reale provides some marketing tips to help grow and maintain your customer base ("Oh, the Places You'll Go!" pg. 17).

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An Ecological Escape

Koi pond balances functionality with aesthetics

by Ryan Farnol,
Platinum Ponds & Landscaping

In the quaint city of Holland, Michigan, the team at Platinum Ponds & Landscaping embarked on an ambitious project aimed at creating a stunning and serene outdoor space for a homeowner. The centerpiece of this project is an impressive 20-by-30, 3-foot-deep koi pond designed not only to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the yard, but also to serve as a peaceful getaway for a local couple and their dog Walter.

Walter was a huge part of the project, always willing to lend a helping paw between daily requests to throw him his toys. The homeowners, who are outdoor enthusiasts and pond





This pond features two low-profile, cantilevered-edge seating areas that bring aesthetic interest as well as a perfect place to sit with your feet in the water. Our first visitor (left), "Snappy" the turtle, made his first leap into the pond.







We utilized a 100-by-30-foot liner (top) to fully cover the 30-by-20, 3-foot-deep pond footprint, wetland filter and intake bay. The wetland filter (middle) was strategically positioned above the pond to create the aesthetic of a large reflection pool, allowing two distinct streams to flow into it naturally. Three pumps (bottom) were employed to circulate water into the wetland, waterfalls and aeration jets. The pipes were installed beneath the flagstone seating areas and between the pergola posts.

vlog followers, were very involved and incredible to work with.

This pond project showcases a variety of features that blend functionality with beautiful aesthetics and integrates a natural backwoods forest backdrop. The pond features two separate cantilever flagstone seating areas, a wetland filter and a cozy pergola, all while overcoming significant challenges related to the sloped terrain. During construction, after we initially filled the pond with water, the next morning we were delighted to find our very first guest from nature. All of a sudden, a plop was heard, and there it was — a baby snapping turtle had arrived in its new pond! To this day, the homeowners have taken the baby snapping turtle in and brought him inside to ensure his survival over the winter.

Wetland Filtration

The koi pond measures a generous 20 by 30 feet and boasts a depth of 3 feet. The entire system holds approximately 10,000 gallons of water, providing an ideal environment for koi fish to thrive. We built a custom fish cave into the bottom terrace of the pond along with a fish cave that provide the fish plenty of places to hide. To keep water temperatures cool and provide additional cover for the fish, we installed three hardy lilies to provide shaded areas for the pond along with more than 30 other various aquatic plants. A wetland filter, intake bay, a Signature Series 6000 BioFalls filter, and three custom-built aeration jets pushing approximately 1,500 gph per jet toward the intake bay ensured proper filtration for this incredible pond!

Since we were restricted by grades and space, the 8-by-10-foot wetland we felt was a bit undersized based on a 500-square-foot pond. To achieve the water quality the client desired, we decided to add the BioFalls filter with extra BioBalls filtration media as well. The three jets offer additional oxygen and push the water toward the intake bay to keep floating debris from settling and creating algae blooms.

We planted mini cattails and iris in the wetland, which can remain potted to prevent overgrowth, but we wanted the filtering properties they offer. They are among Mother Nature's best-filtering aquatic plants that help remove toxins, but they are often frowned upon, as they tend to overtake and spread out of control. In most cases, we plant them directly in the wetland, but they can remain potted to allow the roots to extend deep into the wetland gravel for excellent filtration benefits. The only water treatment we added to the intake bay was beneficial bacteria. The homeowners report pristine water quality and clarity.

Retaining Walls

The first thing one notices upon seeing this amazing pond layout is the unique shape and two different custom-built retaining walls with cantilevered edge-flagstone seating areas. A newer trend in pond construction that we are seeing more and more is incorporating curved-radius-shaped retaining walls in certain areas of the pond. Often installed as an anchor for a fire pit or cantilevered edge patio, retaining walls in ponds offer a very unique way to break up rock work and offer more unique shapes to a pond.

This pond project showcases a variety of features that blend functionality with beautiful aesthetics and integrates a natural backwoods forest backdrop. The pond features two separate cantilever flagstone seating areas, a wetland filter and a cozy pergola, all while overcoming significant challenges related to the sloped terrain.

The large pond footprint features a flagstone seating area on one side elegantly shaded by a custom-built pergola. The opposite side of the pond is uniquely edged with a matching flagstone walkway, which invites one to walk down steps from the raised composite deck and step right to the edge of the pond. A giant, flat, step-out



This aerial drone image illustrates the pond's layout in relation to the house. Due to a grade change of over 3 feet sloping away from the house and toward the surrounding woods, we brought in more than 200 yards of soil to achieve the appropriate grades.



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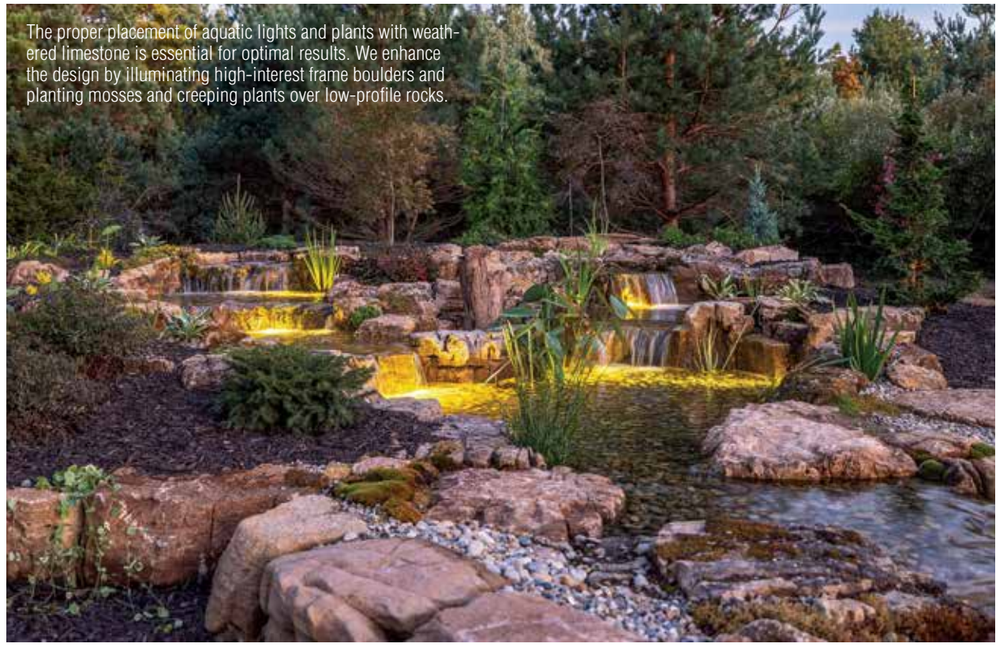
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The proper placement of aquatic lights and plants with weathered limestone is essential for optimal results. We enhance the design by illuminating high-interest frame boulders and planting mosses and creeping plants over low-profile rocks.

rock was carefully nestled right into the corner of the pond at the edge of the walkway for the perfect spot to feed the koi. Three aeration jets were strategically placed in the dead zones of the pond, with crossing beams of light from 3-watt aquatic lights.

We find that overdoing aquatic lighting can have a negative impact. The darker parts of the pond bring just as much interest as the areas that are illuminated. Ambient aquatic lighting and mild disturbance of the water from the aeration jets bring utter relaxation and peaceful sights and sounds that are achieved by having the perfect amount of illumination.

An Aesthetic Harmony

A defining feature of the pond is the elegant incorporation of two split streams that naturally converge into a strategically placed wetland filter, which is located mid-stream just above the pond. This wetland filter serves as the initial expansive pooling area and is designed to facilitate not only the filtration, but also the natural merging of the two streams into cascading waterfalls that flow into the wetland below. From an aesthetic perspective, this design not only complements the existing landscape, but it also ensures visual balance, preventing the streams from appearing lopsided.

To achieve this harmonious design, we brought in 200 yards of fill sand to elevate the grades and create a gently sloped berm for the waterfalls. The original contours of the property sloped away in the opposite direction,



A defining feature of the pond is the elegant incorporation of two split streams that naturally converge into a strategically placed wetland filter, which is located mid-stream just above the pond.

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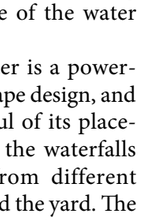
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making the addition of fill sand essential to establish a total head height of 3 feet above the water level of the pond. Each waterfall, distinct in its character, contributes to a captivating visual focal point while also producing the soothing sounds of flowing water, enriching the overall ambiance of the water garden.

The sound of water is a powerful element in landscape design, and the team was mindful of its placement, ensuring that the waterfalls could be enjoyed from different vantage points around the yard. The combination of the pond, streams and waterfalls creates a serene atmosphere, allowing the homeowners to escape the hustle and bustle of daily life. The project not only enhances the homeowners' outdoor experience, but it also serves a valuable lesson in the importance of creating wildlife-friendly environments. This koi pond stands as a testament to the beauty of nature and the joy of fostering biodiversity in our backyards.

About the Author



Ryan Farnol is the owner of Platinum Ponds & Landscaping, a premier water feature and outdoor living designer and installer in West Michigan. With a team of skilled professionals and a passion for creating beautiful and functional outdoor spaces, Platinum Ponds & Landscaping specializes in creating custom ponds, waterfalls, fountains and other water features that enhance the beauty and tranquility of any outdoor area. Whether you're looking to add a peaceful water feature to your backyard or create a stunning outdoor living space, Platinum Ponds & Landscaping has the expertise to bring your vision to life.



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Oh, the Places You'll Go!

Boost your business with effective marketing

by Laura Reale,
BlueGreen Marketing

For pond contractors, growing a business means reaching new clients, building strong relationships with existing ones and expanding services like maintenance. A well-rounded marketing plan is the key to achieving these goals.

In this article, we'll explore the essential components of an effective marketing strategy, highlight the power of email marketing and discuss how to combine it with tools like social media, Google My Business, and LinkedIn. We'll also cover how a "push-pull" marketing strategy can enhance your approach, and why growing your email list is crucial to long-term success.

Create a Marketing Plan

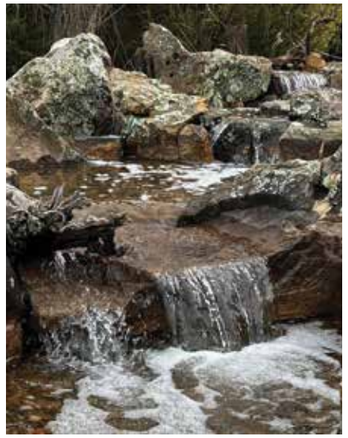
Every successful pond business starts with a clear marketing plan. Think of it as a roadmap guiding your efforts and ensuring your strategies align with your business goals. Without a plan, your marketing efforts can be inconsistent, unfocused and less effective.

A solid plan allows you to set clear, specific, measurable goals, whether it's increasing maintenance contracts, promoting seasonal services, or driving more sales of new pond builds. Knowing your goals helps streamline your efforts and ensures you're investing in the right activities.

Consistency is crucial in marketing. Your branding, from your website to your emails and social media, should reflect a unified message. A marketing plan keeps all communications consistent, making your brand more recognizable.

With measurable objectives, you can track your success and adjust your strategy as needed. This data-driven approach allows you





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to invest in what works and refine or eliminate what doesn't.

Develop a Strategy

Here are five steps to build a successful marketing strategy.

1. **Define your audience.** Understand who your clients are, what their pain points are and how your services can help solve their problems.

2. **Set clear goals.** Set specific, measurable goals that you can track, whether it's to increase maintenance contracts or promote a new service.

3. **Develop a content calendar.** Plan your email campaigns, social media posts and updates ahead of time to ensure regular communication.

4. **Utilize multiple channels.** Combine email marketing with social media, Google My Business, LinkedIn and other channels to maximize your reach.

5. **Track and adjust.** Monitor the success of your campaigns, learn what works and adjust your strategies accordingly.

Why it Matters

Email marketing should be a cornerstone of your marketing strategy. It's cost-effective and direct, allowing you to reach clients where they are most likely to see your message: their inbox.

This enables cost-effective engagement, as regular emails allow you to stay in touch with clients without a hefty budget. Keep existing clients informed about special offers, seasonal maintenance services and helpful pond-care tips.

Regular maintenance is essential for pond owners, but they might not always remember to schedule it. Sending timely, seasonal reminders about maintenance packages can grow your maintenance services and significantly boost revenue. For example, an email campaign at the beginning of spring can remind clients to schedule pond cleanouts, while fall emails can promote winterizing services.

Email marketing isn't just about sales; it's about building relationships. Sending educational content, such as tips on pond care or seasonal checklists, helps establish your authority and keeps your business top-of-mind when current clients and potential customers need services.

Use emails to inform clients about new products, exclusive discounts, special offers and services, or upcoming events. Highlighting maintenance packages or promotions for new installations can attract attention and drive sales.

Email marketing can also promote your blog and video content (vlogs). Sharing informative articles, how-to guides and videos through newsletters drives traffic to your website, increases engagement and positions your business as a knowledgeable authority in the pond industry.

Push-Pull Strategy

To maximize your marketing impact, consider using a "push-pull" strategy. This approach balances two techniques.

Platforms like YouTube and Facebook act as "pull" channels, attracting customers to your content. When you post videos of your pond installations, maintenance tips or even before-and-after transformations, you pull in viewers who are interested in these topics. They engage with your content, follow your channels and begin to recognize your brand.

Email marketing, on the other hand, is a "push" channel. You are directly sending information to your audience, pushing your content and offers straight to their inboxes. It's proactive and ensures your messages reach customers, whether they were actively seeking information or not.

Combining these strategies creates a well-rounded approach. Use videos to draw in potential customers, then push follow-up emails to nurture those leads, offering them more information, exclusive deals or calls to action.

Real-World Example

AquaReale, a pond company in the Philadelphia area, successfully grew its maintenance division using email marketing. In 2023, they sold over $250,000 worth of maintenance services simply by sending well-timed, strategic email campaigns. Seasonal reminders, promotional deals and educational content helped keep clients engaged and motivated to book services throughout the year. AquaReale's success demonstrates how a thoughtful email marketing approach can lead to significant business growth.

Other Platforms

While email marketing is powerful, it's even more effective when paired with other marketing strategies. Consider using platforms like social media, Google My Business, and LinkedIn to connect with more clients.

Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube allow you to reach a broader audience, showcase projects and engage directly with followers. Share photos, videos and tips to keep people interested and encourage them to follow your page. Use social media to promote blog posts, videos and special offers. Reinforcing your messages across different platforms can make your campaigns more effective. Respond to comments, answer questions and participate in discussions to build a sense of community around your brand.

Google My Business (GMB) can give you a local search engine optimization (SEO) boost. Optimize your GMB listing so local customers can easily find your services. Include photos, client reviews and detailed descriptions. Showcase positive customer reviews to significantly impact your credibility. Encourage satisfied clients to leave feedback and respond to reviews promptly. Regular updates, such as promotions or seasonal reminders, keep your listing active and engaging.

LinkedIn helps you build professional connections with other contractors, suppliers and potential commercial clients. Networking can open doors to new opportunities and partnerships. Share expert content by posting articles, project updates and insights to establish yourself as an authority in the pond industry. Announce new services, upcoming events or special deals to reach a professional audience.

Grow Your Email List

One critical aspect of email marketing is continually growing your list. Building a large, engaged email list is essential because people buy when they're ready — not necessarily when you're ready to sell.

Ensure all past and current customers are on your list. Whenever you complete a project, include that client in your ongoing communications. Anyone who inquires about your services should be added to your list (with permission). They may not be ready to buy today, but they could be in the future. Add an easy-to-find signup form on your website that encourages visitors to join your list for updates, tips and exclusive offers.

So, if you're a pond contractor looking to expand your business, a well-rounded marketing plan that emphasizes email marketing can make a huge difference. Regular communication through email helps grow your maintenance services, keep customers engaged and promote your business year-round.

Using complementary tools like social media, Google My Business and LinkedIn can further boost your visibility and help you reach a broader audience. Combine these with a solid push-pull strategy, and you'll have a comprehensive approach to marketing that drives real results.

About the Author



Laura Reale, the president of BlueGreen Marketing, is a marketing expert for the pond industry, helping businesses grow through email campaigns, social media and select strategic platforms. For more information visit **www.bluegreen-marketing.com**

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Liner Techniques

Flat Lining

How to master the bare-liner pond floor finish

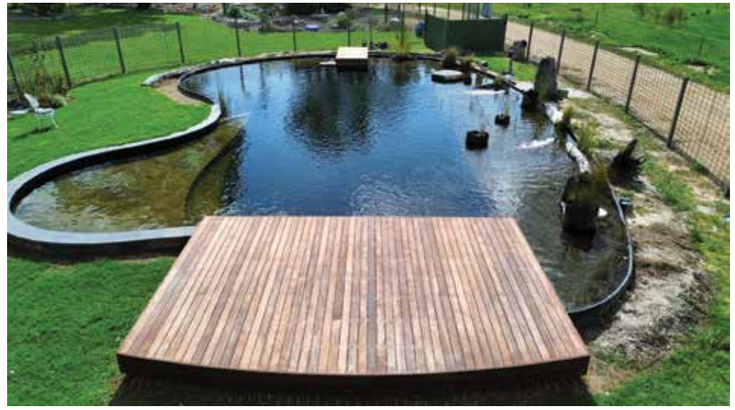
by Jeff Knox,
Riverwater Pools

In 2006, I started construction of my prototype natural swimming pool in southeastern Australia using EPDM rubber liner as the waterproof membrane. At that time, I had no experience cutting and joining EPDM liner. I was concerned that a water depth of 10 feet was too much pressure for the joins, so I didn't cut the liner and ended up with large pleats on the curved wall sections, starting at zero at the floor and getting bigger as the wall height increased.

Not long after finishing my pool, I discovered that joined sheets of EPDM rubber were used for large irrigation reservoirs that were more than 30 feet deep. If the joining system could cope with those pressures, 10 feet deep was not going to be an issue.

At that point, I realized that every natural swimming pool I built for clients with a bare-liner finish was going to need a custom-fit EPDM liner. I threw myself in the deep end with my first





We lined the shallow play area and step (above, left) in preparation for crazy paving to be laid on top (above, right). Prior to any cutting, the liner (bottom, left) is pulled and dragged into the exact position it needs to be. A big cut in the wrong place would be impossible to hide. When the liner is positioned correctly (bottom, right), let the cutting and joining begin — in this case, starting with the deep-end corners and working back toward the shallow end. The floor join was left until last as the pool filled so that it wasn't stretched.

client's natural pool, and every pool since has had a custom-fit EPDM liner.

EPDM Advantages

Not all natural swimming pool and pond liners end up being covered in rocks and stones to hide the liner from view. So, when a design calls for bare EPDM as the finished surface, it needs to look neat and tidy, without acres of excess liner folded over and highly visible in clear water. This is when a liner needs to be custom fit by cutting and joining using the liner manufacturer's proprietary joining products and methods.

It's OK for an inexperienced do-it-yourself builder to have pleats and folds and be happy with what they've built, but not so much for a contractor charging tens of thousands of dollars to build a pond or pool. EPDM is just about the best liner to use for on-site cutting and joining, because the joining system comprising primer and seam tape are very good when used properly, and it also has the longest lifespan for a liner.

Another benefit to custom-fitting EPDM is that no expensive machinery for joining on site is required.

There's almost no limit to the shape for a custom-fit EPDM install, although certain shapes will make it much easier or more difficult.

Flat Walls & Floors

Mostly flat floors and walls with well-formed corners (if square or rectangular) will make the joins easier to do and allow the liner to fit with almost zero pleats or wrinkles. Curved walls can be lined with a join at the floor, or the wall pleats can be cut out and joined to remove the pleats and produce a very neat result. Any large-bowl shaped surface, whether convex or concave, will not allow the liner to lay flat without pleats or wrinkles forming, so it's best to avoid those contours.

Earth walls can be hand trimmed after excavation to remove high points if the soil permits. Rocky soils will make hand trimming difficult, with generally a rougher finish to the dig. There are methods to making walls flat, including using sprayed concrete or stabilized sand compacted behind form work or even rendering with bricklayer's mortar for filling lesser irregularities. Some soil types will allow for a sufficiently flat and smooth finish to walls without any need to fix the excavation. Such soils may give a satisfactory finish to a floor without further repair work, and geofabric can be applied directly on top.

Otherwise, for making a flat floor, concrete or stabilized sand (sand and cement about 1:10) can be used — or even compacted masonry sand and crusher dust for level floors.

Another major benefit to having flat walls and floors (besides looking neat and professional) is the ability to effectively clean the liner of biofilm, as required, by brushing or vacuuming.





Underlayment

Once the excavation has been repaired using the methods above and all loose material removed, it's time to install a geofabric underlayment or suitable equivalent to protect the liner from the excavated ground. Some underlays sold for this purpose are almost see-through and almost totally ineffective at protecting a liner. A good product for liner underlay is non-woven geofabric made from recycled plastic with a weight of at least 300 grams per square meter (0.06 lbs. per square foot) as a minimum. Geofabric won't degrade, providing long-term liner protection.

The underlay seen in most of the pictures is 510 grams per square meter (0.1 lbs. per square foot) — so a seriously good thickness. This will offer so much more protection from sharp stones than a thin layer of geofabric.

A thick geofabric layer in a bare-liner pond or pool also provides a safer surface for swimmers and divers. No more eggs on kid's foreheads from hitting their heads on the bottom of a hard-surface pool — the finished EPDM-lined pool's floor and walls are not too hard or soft.

Once the underlay has been installed, it is good practice to vacuum the underlay prior to installing the liner to remove any grit or anything else that will be felt under the liner and potentially cause damage to the liner.

Best Practices

Shallow water with an EPDM-lined floor is not a good mix, as the liner will become extremely slippery. About 3 feet of depth is a safe minimum. One can still slip and fall over at that depth, but at least there's enough water to absorb the fall. It's always good to have family or friends present for a good laugh if it happens.

It's good practice to size the pond or pool excavation to match stock EPDM widths in order to reduce waste. As little as 1 foot of overhang is a good allowance to shoot for when calculating excavation width and depth. As for length, 50 and 100 feet are stock-roll lengths and the most economical way to buy. Cut-to-length is also available from most EPDM suppliers at an increased price.

A crane or other lifting device is often best practice to get the liner in the prepared and ready hole.



A large pool lined with EPDM can be a superior construction method to using concrete when it comes to cost, especially in remote locations.





A decent-weight geofabric is good insurance for liner protection from below. A custom-fit EPDM liner needs a custom-fit geofabric underlay.

It's not worth risking damage or holes to the heavy liner by using rough-handling methods.

Putting the liner in the hole in just the right place is reasonably important, so that as the liner is unrolled and unfolded, it's already basically in the right place. This is not so important with a small roll of liner, but with a 100-by-50-foot roll at several hundred pounds, every bit helps.

Once the liner is rolled out, it may have manufacturing codes printed on it, requiring it to be turned upside down. The white printing is very difficult to remove and doesn't look good in a finished pool or pond. This is not a concern if the liner will be covered in rocks and stones.

When the liner is positioned and held in the right place using sandbags or similar, the excess liner can be accurately cut out and removed one join at a time, leaving enough overlapping liner to complete the join. Care is needed to make sure the cuts are in the right place, plus or minus 1/8 inch.

Keep it Clean

Prior to applying primer to the join, the EPDM should be cleaned of dirt, dust, oils or any other contaminant. In Australia, a product called Prepsol is ideal for this. It's a clear liquid mostly used in automotive painting as a degreaser. Personal protective equipment such as nitrile rubber gloves are mandatory when using such chemicals, as we don't want that chemical being absorbed by our skin.

When the liner is clean and ready for primer, it's good practice to accurately mark the extent of primer so no more than needed is applied. A white wax crayon or engineering chalk used with a ruler or straight edge are good to use. If primer is applied well outside the join line, it needs to be cleaned off after the join is completed using a rag and Prepsol, because the primer will turn white underwater and won't look very good.

It takes a fair effort to clean off the excess primer, which teaches the installer to be accurate with primer application. Using a contact adhesive to hold one side of the join in place makes it much easier to apply primer and not have the EPDM curl up due to the applied primer. An aerosol can of rubber contact adhesive is the easiest and quickest product to use. Rubber contact adhesive in a tin is OK but much slower to apply. Joins need top be done with EPDM in a relaxed state; it's not good to have joins under tension, as the join may eventually fail.

Custom fitting an EPDM liner sure takes a lot more effort than covering the liner with rocks and stones, but it provides a completely different finish and is perfect for clients who wish for a hybrid look — a cross between a normal swimming pool and a swimming pond. It takes dedication and practice, but the result is worth the effort.



Although EPDM can be custom fit to complex shapes, it pays to not be too ambitious if the budget doesn't allow it. This pool's liner took more than two weeks for two people to install.

About the Author



Jeff Knox is the owner of Riverwater Pools in New South Wales, Australia. He's a mostly self-taught, multi-skilled building and construction tradesman. Since 1985, after becoming a tradesman boilermaker/specialist welder, Jeff has combined many of his learned skills to create conventional swimming pools and structural landscaping. In 2006, Jeff developed a unique approach to non-additive, living-water swimming pools and continues his passion with perfection and innovation.







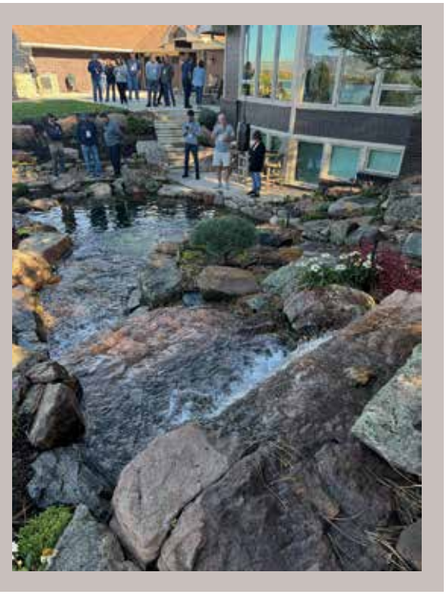


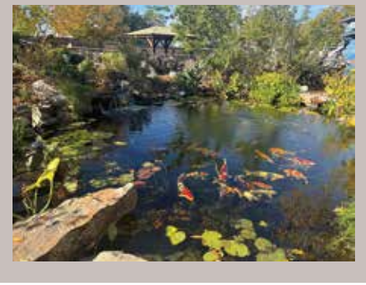




Colorado Pond Tours









Mile-High Masterclass

Recap of 2024 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference



by Demi Fortuna,
Demi Fortuna, Atlantic/Oase

The "Mile-High City" of Denver, Colorado hosted the 2024 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference (APC) at the Rally Hotel downtown.

Pre-Conference Tour

Early attendees signed up for the pond tour, with three vans leaving the hotel at 9:00 a.m. At the first stop, a lovely home with a panoramic view of Marston Lake, the homeowner and the pond builder, Jesse Schumaker of Urban Flow, were outside to greet our group — all 50 of us. The location of the pond, some 10 feet below the walk to the front door, offered great views from both upper and lower floors of the immaculately landscaped home, and adjacent sitting areas invited closer interaction. A stream with numerous falls started high on the slope opposite the steps down to the water's edge, creating a pleasant soundscape to match the well-designed and enchanting layout. In this perfect example of the Clear Water System, ProfiClear filtration fed by an AquaMax Eco Premium pump in the bottom of the pond maintains the koi, while an Atlantic Skimmer housing a L-Series pump removes floating debris from surrounding lawn and gardens and powers the vigorous waterfalls.



Our next stop offered completely different, but equally stunning views. Located at the top of a mountain accessible only by a single lane and hairpin turns that showcased the skill of the drivers, attendees enjoyed both landscape and waterscape from a unique perspective, the views from the mountain-

2024 Atlantic-Oase Awards Announced



Atlantic-Oase announced the winners of this year's Awards at the 2024 APC in the heart of Denver Oct. 23-24, 2024. Loyal Ponds was named Atlantic Professional Contractor of the Year. Principal Andrew Marchel and team leader Zach accepted the award on behalf of the entire team, one of the premier water-feature companies in their region, servicing over 1,000 water features for both residential and commercial clients. Their exemplary engagement with Atlantic-Oase, including participation in conferences and training sessions, was cited, as well as their dedication to honing their craft, developing innovative designs and creating beautiful water features.



Jeff Weemhoff presented his Presidential Award to Mike Allen of Grumpy Gills, a water-garden and koi dealer offering a wide range of products and a great selection of koi in a relatively small footprint. Mike and his team have expanded the koi community in the area of Northglenn, Colorado, assisting others in understanding proper care for the fish and the benefits of filtration ad doing a great job of educating others in the region on the best practices in the hobby and helping hundreds of customers. A major player in the local koi club, Grumpy Gills has become an integral resource for hobbyists around the area.

The Sunshine State's own Pond Monster of Winter Haven, Lloyd Lightsey, presented his Monster Award to Jason Lenox of Ponds Inc. of Illinois. The Monster Award recognizes those in the industry who have gone above and beyond to give back to those around them and made a difference in their community. Lloyd was the first recipient of the award in 2019, which was named after him for his and his wife Karrie's contributions in the fight against cancer, and has, in turn, awarded it to others in the field every year since. Jason Lenox was unable to attend in person but accepted the award via video conference to thunderous applause.





top complementing the view into the koi pond through a large window. The superb rock work visible from the bottom of the pond to the top of the waterfall matched the surrounding natural outcrops seamlessly, showcasing the work of Art of the Yard, the A-O Contractors of the Year who were there to explain the workings of the crystal-clear pond.









Then it was back down the mountain to the next pond, also by Art Of The Yard, a pair of connected ponds built into a steep back yard with a bridge crossing between them. The charm of the small ponds and the falls between them made their construction even more impressive, in light of the fact that all the material had to be brought into the back and down the steep slope by hand.

Lunch was served via food truck back at the home of Shane Hemphill of Art Of The Yard, where visitors admired his 17,000-gallon pond and magnificent large koi, with a lucky few seated at a table sporting both a running stream and dancing flames. Wow!

Then we visited the site of the 2019 Koi Pond Build to see how well the first-ever Clear Water System had held up. There, the backyard koi pond exhibited crystal clear water and excellent water quality, with owner Kyle Weemhoff confessing to practically no maintenance whatsoever! (It has been such a success that the same exact system is now available for sale, #94632.)

The pre-Conference tour ended back at the Rally Hotel with a delicious buffet and drinks on the rooftop terrace, followed by a few words of welcome from company president Jeff Weemhoff.

Conference Kickoff

The conference seminars kicked off promptly after breakfast the next morning with a powerful and moving keynote presentation. Jim Davison, a survivor of the massive 2025 Nepal earthquake, was trapped at 20,000 feet during his first ill-fated climb up Mount Everest. The story of how he and his team survived and the lessons that enabled him to successfully summit the world's tallest mountain only two years later, brought many to tears. His message, finding the resilience to survive and succeed under even the most challenging conditions, will not soon be forgotten.





The seminars started immediately afterward, highlighting best business and construction practices as well as new technology and products. Eric Triplett counseled contractors on Sales Communication; B.J. Linger spoke on effectively marketing locally; Isaac Mashman discussed personal branding and Laura Reale her techniques of email marketing.

Distributors enjoyed a multi-staff discussion with Regional Managers Kyle Weemhoff, Todd Rosendahl and Tyler Fisher on enhancing the distribution side of the business. On the construction side, Shane Hemphill weighed in on Mastering Koi Keeping, while filtration and water quality took a major role in the rest of the presentations.

Clear Water Pond Systems featuring the Clear Water Guarantee took center stage, while Life with a ProfiClear explained the systems that clean themselves from the personal perspectives of Sean Bell and Jim Chubb. In Profitable Bog Filtration, Demi Fortuna and Sean offered modular solutions for those features too large for typical filtration options. Newcomer to A-O but a veteran in the field, Greg Wagner explained the latest technology in Lake Therapy, large-volume water treatments offering astounding results, especially in reduction of sludge. The New Products presentation with Frayne McAtee was especially well attended, presenting among other innovations Pulse 6, new pump technology that combines increased power with lower operating costs in almost total silence.

At the end of the productive day came the awards ceremony, then we were off to the Wynkoop Brewing Company for more networking and good times at the delicious and abundant farewell dinner. Partying only a block from the hotel was a real boon, as the revelry continued well into the night. A wonderful time was had by all!



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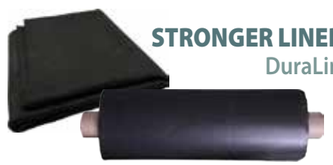
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New Products to Watch

SWIM-RATED PUMPS
from Speck and EasyPro



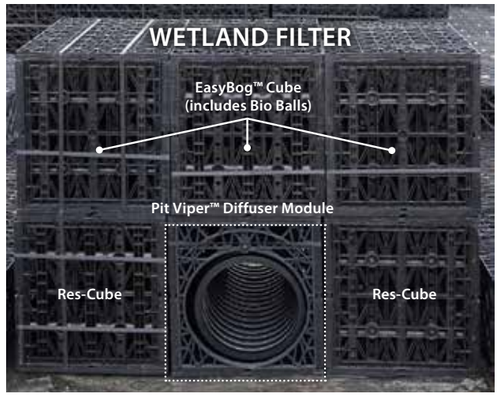
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DuraLiner™ 60 mil EPDM Liner
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and 15 oz Rock Pads

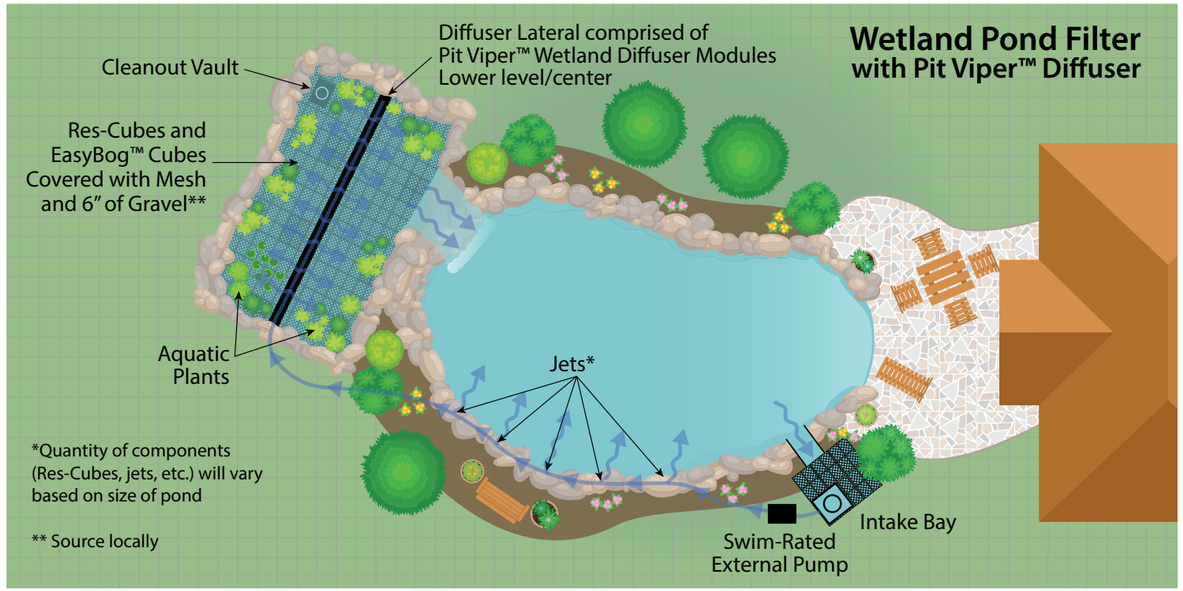


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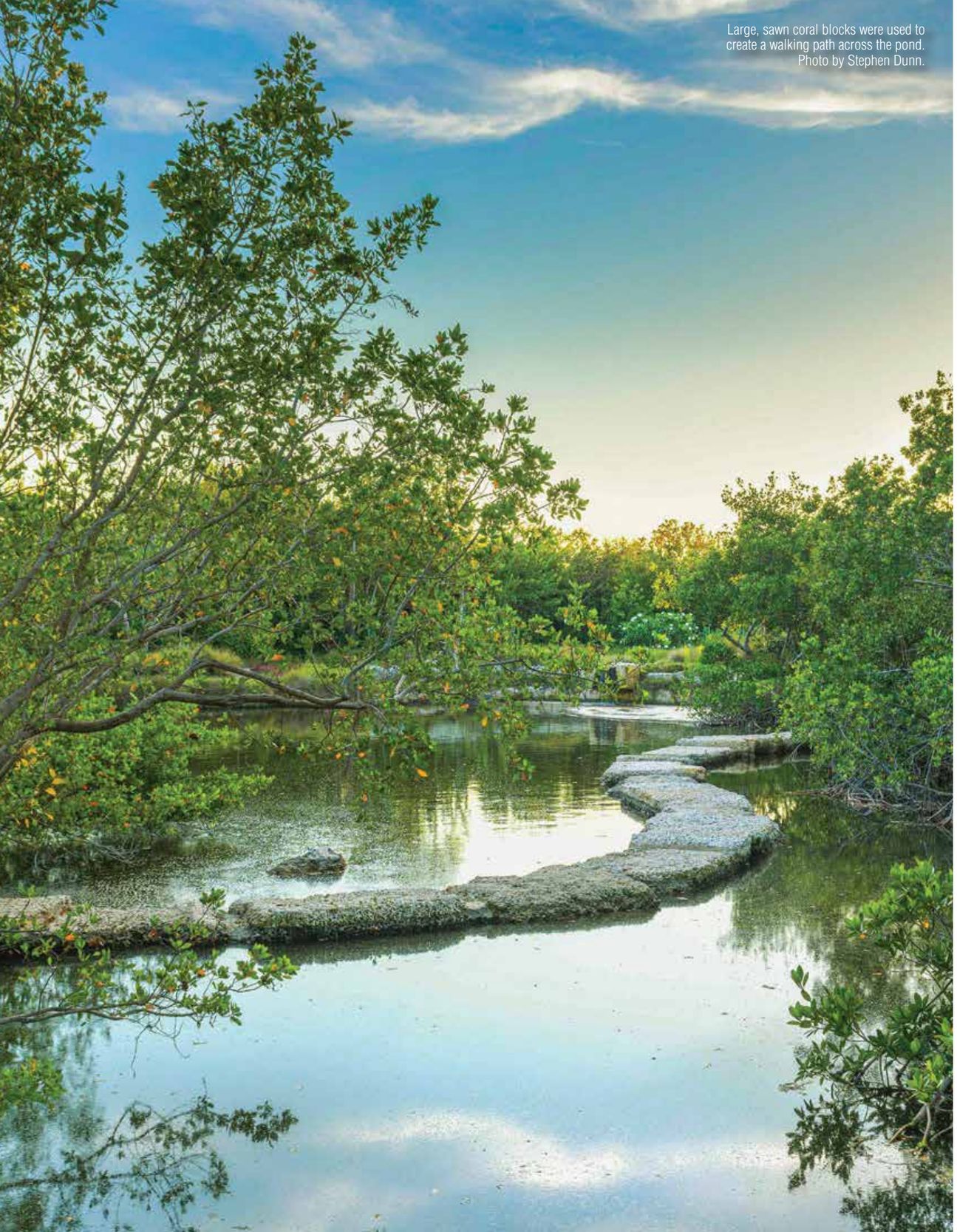


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Large, sawn coral blocks were used to create a walking path across the pond. Photo by Stephen Dunn.

On the Cutting Edge

Creative options with cut rock

by Dave Duensing,
Aquatic Construction Services

Does it sound counterintuitive to incorporate cut rock into a natural water garden, waterfall, stream, pond or swimming pond? Why would you even consider it, and how could it successfully enhance the design, usefulness, interaction opportunities, and your client's enjoyment?

I'm guessing that when you think of cut rock, your mind may instantly go to straight lines and sharp corners. This is far from the reality I hope to explain and demonstrate in this article. I hope to banish forever the myth that cut rock in a water or garden feature is a negative and should be avoided.

Some people even infer that cut rock lowers the overall quality of the finished work or diminishes the rock skill of the installer if that person has to cut the rock to make it work in the feature. My efforts here are to shed some positive light on this subject and offer ideas on how using field-cut rock could enhance an overall project, be a solution to a difficult situation, or become a creative opportunity.

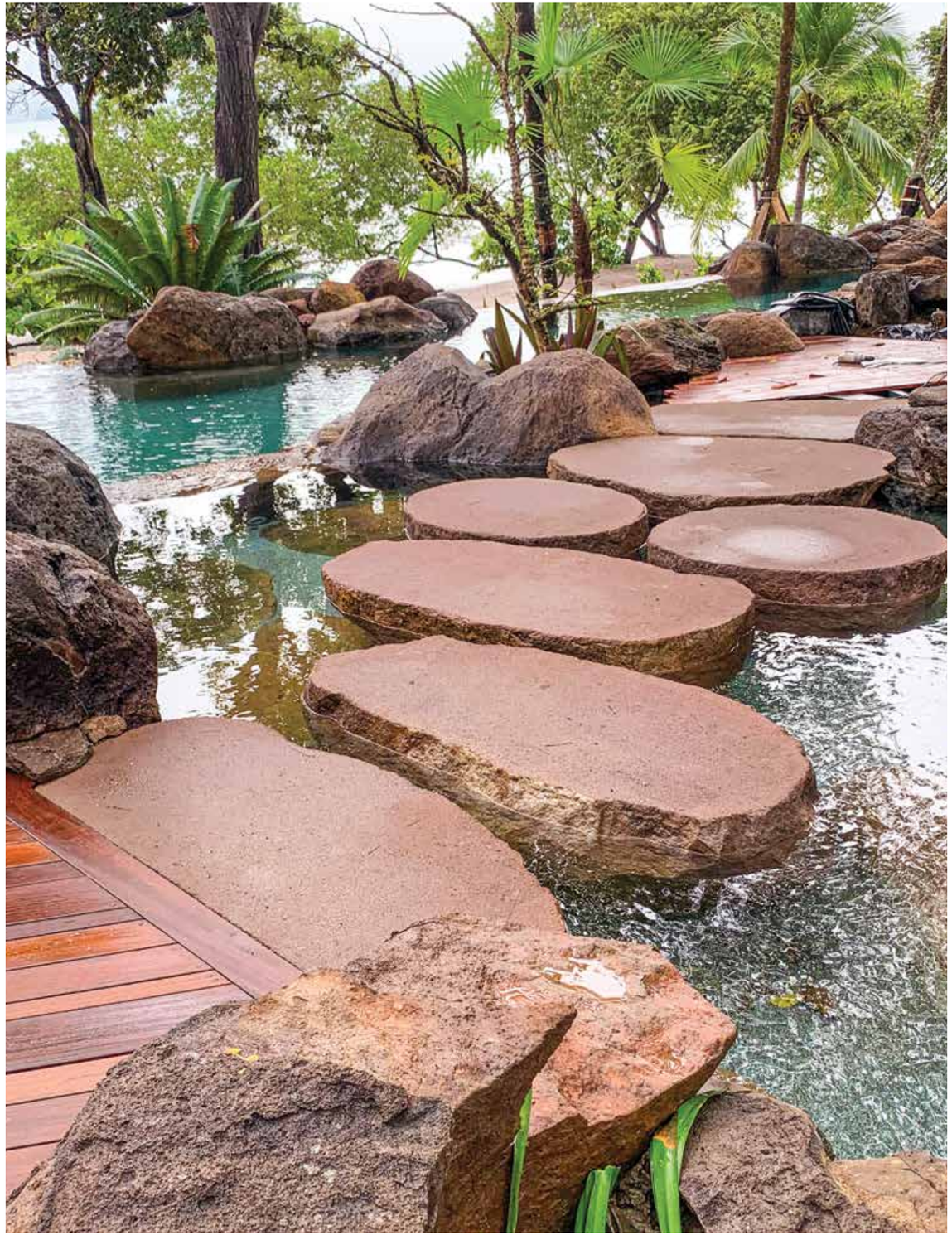
Seeing Rock as Art

At the start of my professional business in 1989, I had a very narrow vision of pond building and rock installation. With so many random shapes and sizes of rock available, it seemed easy to get them to fit together. I had never even thought of why one might want to significantly cut a rock. I was focused on sourcing rocks that had character, and I worked hard to install them in an attractive manner.



It was not until my chance encounter with Anthony Archer-Wills in 1997 at the International Water Garden and Waterlily Expo in Chicago that I was exposed to true artistry with rock. After that, I never looked at a rock the same way. I learned that you can make rocks into

Approximately 140 slabs were cut 7 inches thick to provide material for numerous walkways and staircases. The top surface of each slab was then textured to provide a non-slip surface.



beautiful planters, veneers, staircases, steppingstones and more.

I also learned that not all ponds, streams and waterfalls are built using flexible liner; many are built from structural concrete. These vessels, some even resembling swimming pools, benefit from someone who is skilled with rock and can naturalize the concrete contours and flat surfaces to build realistic-looking shoreline edges and waterfalls within the pool structure.

It is safe to say that almost all of us in business started our careers using basic tools like shovels and wheelbarrows to dig our ponds, and rubber or clay to make them watertight. What I would like to introduce in this article is an atypical, alternative technique that can add value for your client, profits to your bottom line and prestige to your company when the skill is learned and the work executed correctly.

Starting Small

Rock planters or basins within or adjacent to the water feature are a popular and attractive detail. To make a rock planter or basin, we select a rock or boulder, typically of the same material used in the water feature or landscape, making sure it is sized appropriately and free of cracks. We carefully cut and carve out a major portion of the interior, leaving reasonably thick exterior walls for structural integrity. Drain holes in the bottom of planters are critical. On porous rocks such as coral, it is important to seal and waterproof the interior walls.

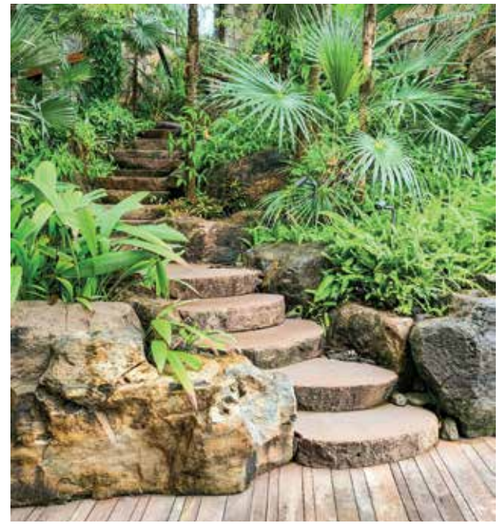
Another popular use is steppingstones for pathways, staircases or crossings over a stream or pond. For pathways and staircases, we typically cut the rock into 7-inch-thick slabs. This provides considerable structural integrity, and I have found 7-inch risers on a staircase to be a comfortable height.

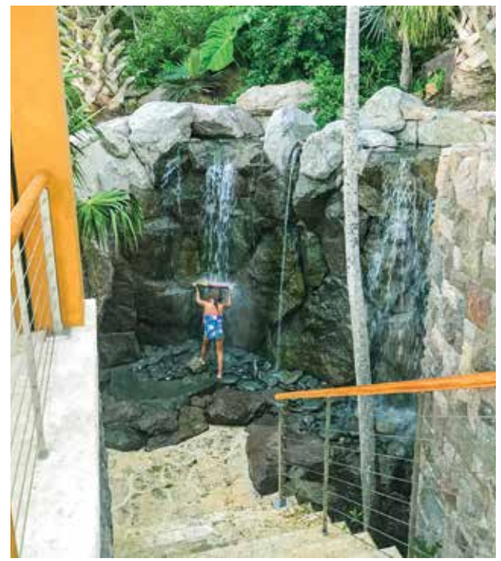
One of the rules we try to follow is to select rocks that are no thicker than the bar length of the chainsaw. This way, the saw can cut through the rock completely and not have a broken edge where the rock snapped and broke away. Once the slab is cut, we remove the fine saw marks from the surface. This rotary bushing tool leaves a textured, non-slip surface like a sandblasted finish. If we have a stream or pond to cross, we adjust the thickness of our cuts to ensure that we end up with 2 to 4 inches of rock sitting above the water level.

Larger Projects

One day you may be requested to build a waterfall, and there just is not enough room. We were called into a staircase waterfall project very late in the process after all the concrete structures were poured. Our dilemma was twofold. First, we could not get the desired size crane near the project, so we could not use full-sized rock. Second, if we used full-sized rock, there would not be room left for the staircase steps and lower waterfall basin. The solu-







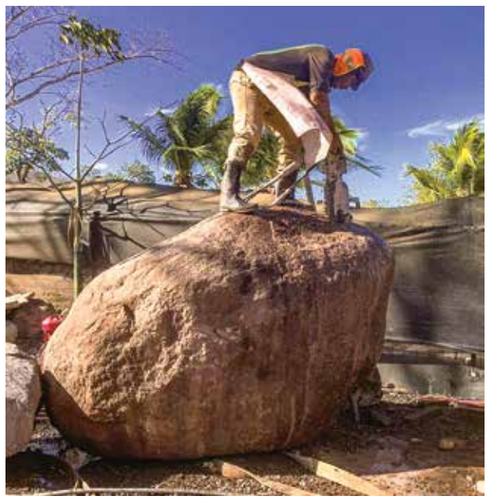
These stepping stones (opposite) are approximately 26 inches tall. The coral planter (top, right) has the first coat of waterproofing applied. These staircase slabs (middle, right) were originally molten lava balls ejected from volcanoes. Upon hitting the ground ,they took on a flatter form, making them a perfect thickness (24 inches) for cutting. To save space, most of the rocks seen in this waterfall (bottom, right) are only 5 to 8 inches thick.







This 7-foot-long rock (above) was cut so it would sit comfortably on the top of the pool wall, avoiding the return jet and ensuring the bottom of the rock would be submerged. These rocks (left) had their lower surfaces trimmed to fit flush to the decking and allow the tile surfaces to mate to the rock edges.





Using a hydraulic chainsaw with a 25-inch bar, we cut all four sides of this 9-by-5 ½-by-5-foot boulder and then used chisels to split it in half.

tion was to use only the portion of rock that would be seen by people using the staircase or viewed from the upstairs patio. The custom-cut rock veneer looks and feels like full-sized rocks were used, but in reality, the rocks were only 3 to 8 inches thick.

If it has not happened yet, there is a good chance a pool builder may approach you to build a rock waterfall inside of or flowing into a swimming pool. In this situation, the pool vessel will likely be concrete. As in the pond industry, when doing water's-edge details, you will want to hide the bottom portion of the rock by submerging it in the water — preferably below the bottom edge of any potential tile line. To do this, you will either need a support bench built within the pool to set your rocks on, or you can cut the back and bottom of the rocks with a right angle cut so it can sit on the top of the wall or beam and hang down the face of the wall.



Rocks are great transitional elements. This rock was trimmed to fit and accent a staircase.

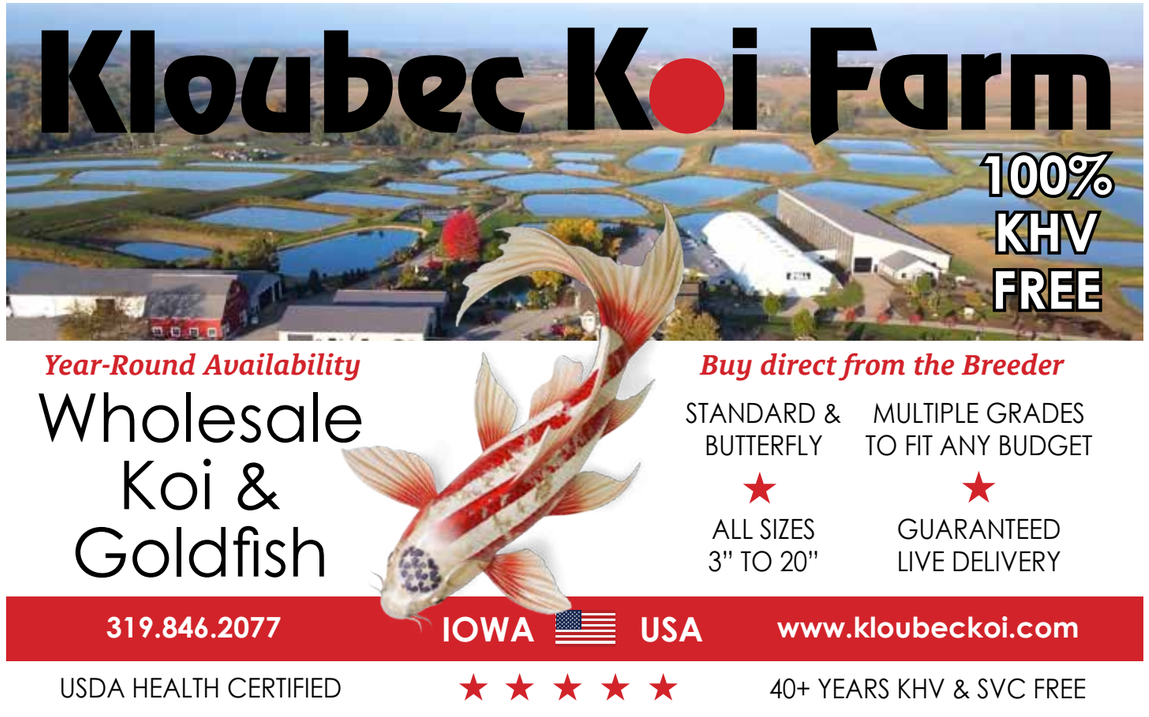
In some cases, a designer or client may want to have one or more rocks sitting on a patio structure or look embedded into a staircase. To build these different affects, we trim the rock to fit flush to the location.

Cutting Rocks?!

Now, I know it sounds crazy. There can't possibly be a good reason to cut a big rock in half.

Well, actually, there are quite a few reasons. In some countries and islands, there is not a ready supply of rock, or if you find the rock you want, it is too great an effort to arrange extraction and hauling. As with many projects, design changes may eat into the schedule and leave you without time to source more rock. For one project, the large crane we had on site ultimately could not extend to the added work areas with a 9-foot rock hanging off the end of the boom. Because time was a critical factor, we determined it was more efficient to cut these larger rocks in half. This would provide twice the number of large rocks without any more extraction and hauling, and with lighter rocks, we could now extend our work area and range with the crane.

One of the more extreme cutting tasks we took on started out as a challenge thrown down by the client. While on an adventurous hike, he found a remote staircase cut into the face of



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This is one of three rocks (left) cut to form a spiral staircase, allowing easy access in and out of a deep swimpond. Dave (above) enjoyed the beginning stage of building a custom-fitted king and queen seat (loveseat) from coral sections.

a solid rock that provided access up a difficult slope. While standing at the base of the staircase, he sent me a photo and asked if I could replicate this at a location on the project. Never having done this before, I, of course, said yes, and set off trying to figure it out. Fortunately, we were nearing the end of the project, and I had a few large, odd-shaped rocks remaining. Out of those remaining, I selected three rocks, all about the same size, and started staging, marking and cutting them. Ultimately having multiple rocks was a blessing, because it allowed the steep staircase to wrap around a significant rock formation.

Like many other trades, rock cutting requires an investment in tools and management of a learning curve. If you, as a water-feature builder, wish to separate yourself and your business from the typical water-feature companies, you will need to find ways to either build ponds better or offer a unique value. The desire to be creative and have your projects stand out from others makes the time spent enhancing your capabilities and skills worthwhile. Once learned, this technique opens up your company to endless opportunities not only to be on the cutting edge, but also to be a cut above.

About the Author

David B. Duensing, a long-time waterscape and hardscape designer and builder, has an extreme passion for natural rock. Over the last few decades, he has developed sources for some magnificent examples of rock, which often come with a story. Having spent nearly as much time in search of perfect rocks as he has in constructing and placing those rocks, Dave's resources for natural rock are as broad and multifaceted as they are interesting, and a valuable asset to gardens and landscapes.



After the creation of David B. Duensing & Associates Inc in 1989, Duensing focused his efforts on learning and perfecting the design and construction techniques required to perform at the top of the industry. In 2006, he formed Aquatic Construction Services (ACS) which specializes in the construction aspect of natural rock formations and living water features. In 2019, Dave created a division within ACS that assists other professional and landowners in sourcing the very best natural rock possible for specific projects and clients.

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The elegant and rare Watonai

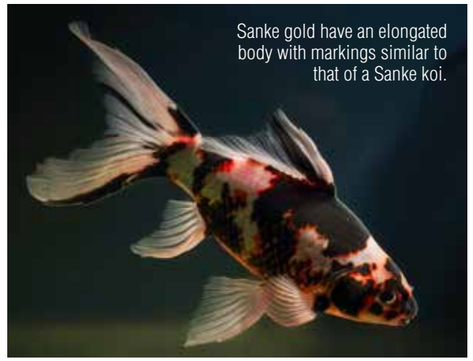
by Rick Gann,
Blackwater Creek Koi Farm

Many of us can attribute our love of fish of all kinds to the very first fish we cared for as a child, which probably was a common goldfish in a classic goldfish bowl. As time progresses, many of us move on to other varieties and leave the goldfish as a fond memory of the past.

Why not encourage pond owners to consider revisiting that first influential goldfish? We are regularly asked if koi and goldfish can be kept and get along in the same pond. There always seems to be both an interest and a hesitancy because of all the question and concerns. Here are some of the more common questions we receive on the subject, along with the answers we offer.

Can Goldfish Thrive in a Pond?

Yes. Goldfish are hardy fish that can tolerate a variety of conditions and are great candidates for your pond. In fact, goldfish have been kept in private ponds dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). They became so popular that during the Sang Dynasty (960–1279 CE), the empress restricted keeping gold/yellow goldfish, as that color was the imperial color.



Sanke gold have an elongated body with markings similar to that of a Sanke koi.

The United States government gave away goldfish to residents of Washington, D.C., and Baltimore from 1884 to 1894. At the height of the program, the government gave away more than 20,000 fish per year. Note that we are not advocating giving them away! However, there has been a rich history here in the United States with goldfish.

On July 8, 2011, the Space Shuttle Atlantis took off on its final mission to space — Flight STS-135, a 12-day mission. Aboard the shuttle were Shubunkin goldfish eggs provided by Blackwater Creek Koi Farm. The purpose was to compare the development of eggs in microgravity (a weightless environment) to eggs developed on the ground in Earth's normal gravity.

From historical China to the weightlessness of space, goldfish have thrived in almost any environment, and they most definitely can and will thrive in your customer's koi pond.

Will They Get Along with Koi?

Yes. Here on our farm, we regularly keep koi and goldfish in ponds and holding tanks without any issue. As koi are larger and can be more aggressive during feeding time, we recommend goldfish varieties that can quickly navigate an active crowd of feeding fish. Otherwise, we see koi and goldfish as perfect pondmates.

The most important factor is to keep a well-maintained pond with adequate space and proper care. In this environment, koi and goldfish can



Koi or goldfish? It can be hard to tell.

happily thrive together.

Which Varieties Are Best?

We recommend goldfish that can grow up to at least 10 inches. As mentioned previously, an active and accomplished swimmer is best when navigating a crowd of koi during feeding time.

As their name implies, the common goldfish is probably the first goldfish many of us discover when we are young. These are hardy and can grow up to 12 inches. They come in various colors like orange, red, and white.

Comet goldfish are known for their long, flowing tails. They are active swimmers and can reach up to 12 inches in length. They are also quite hardy. The comet is often confused with the common goldfish; however, comet goldfish have longer fins and a shorter, slender body size with a tracing tail — hence, the name "comet."

Shubunkin, which roughly translates to "red brocade" in Japanese, are similar to common goldfish and comets, but with the characteristic calico color pattern. Like all calico-colored goldfish, Shubunkin have clear, nacreous scales. While a metallic-scale goldfish has color pigments embedded in the scale itself, nacreous-scale goldfish have pigment in the skin below. Color is seen through the clear scales. Black pigment lying deep within the skin appears blue to our eye. Ideally, a Shubunkin has a bluish background topped with markings of red, orange, yellow or brown, plus black spots. They can typically reach between 10 to 12 inches and are active swimmers.

Blackwater Creek was the first American koi farm to commercially produce Wakins. We fell in love with these fish while we trained in Japan. The Wakin goldfish has an elongated body style with only slight compression, and they have a short double-tail. The beautiful and hard-to-find Wakin can grow up to 10 inches, and they do wonderfully in aquariums and ponds. The original colors are red, white or a combination of red and white. We've also been successfully producing a few calico Wakins as well.

Watonai are amazing goldfish that have the long, slender body of the Wakin, but with a much larger tail that spreads horizontally. The width of the tail fin can equal the length of the entire body; however, they have broader, more elegant tail fins. Watonai were developed by crossing a Wakin with a Ryukin in the early 20th century. Even with the flamboyant tail, the Watonai is a hardy variety that does well and can overwinter in an outdoor pond or water garden. They move a little more slowly than Wakin, Shubunkin and comets. They can get fairly large, but the maximum body length is just slightly smaller than these other hardy varieties. Some consider Watonai the ultimate hardy goldfish, as they have good cold tolerance, a fairly large size and a broad flowing tail that makes for an attractive display. They can grow up to 10 inches.

We developed the Sanke Gold in 2011 after over a decade of trials! These remarkable goldfish were developed as an alternative to koi that allows people to keep and enjoy some spectacular fish in a small space, such as a patio pond or an aquarium. Our Sanke Gold have the patterns and colors of a Sanke koi and will grow up to 10 to 12 inches long. They typically have a white base color with large, blocky spots of bright red and inky black.

Finally, we developed our Black Opal Shubunkins at around the same time as our Sanke Gold. These striking goldfish

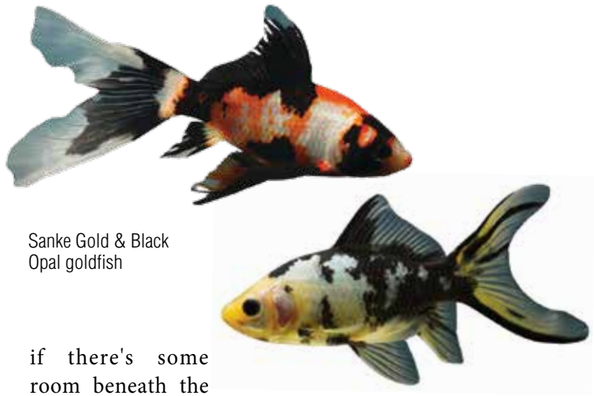


Wakin goldfish can be very hard to find.

have various markings of ebony black against a powder-blue background. Their patterns change as they grow and typically continually improve with age. The fish will grow to be up to 10 to 12 inches long.

Do Goldfish Need Special Care?

No, not at all. A pond environment that is suitable for koi is also perfect for goldfish. Goldfish can tolerate a wide range of temperatures, and common goldfish do best in water that's 60° to 70°F. Goldfish can survive in bodies of water with little to no oxygen for up to five months. Goldfish can survive in ponds that freeze solid during the winter



Sanke Gold & Black Opal goldfish

if there's some room beneath the ice. Both koi and goldfish produce waste, which can affect water quality. A good filtration system is essential to maintain a healthy environment. Regularly monitor water parameters like pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels to ensure a happy pond.

Do Goldfish Need Special Food?

Koi and goldfish do have slightly different dietary needs. Goldfish are willing to eat almost anything and, in general, are more herbivorous. Koi prefer a more protein-rich diet. Ensure you provide a balanced diet that meets the nutritional needs of both types of fish. Consider using a smaller-sized floating pellet for your goldfish, and if you notice your goldfish are being outcompeted by your koi, consider feeding in different locations or using a sinking fish food that gives everyone a chance during feeding time.

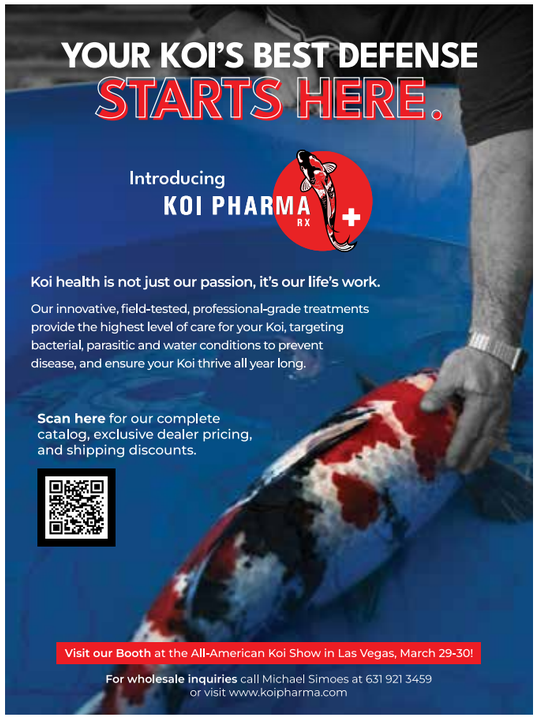
So, should your customers consider adding goldfish to their pond collection? We say emphatically yes! One of the biggest debates we have is which species we love the most. I will just say that nothing empties out our office more quickly than when our Farm Team brings up a new batch of goldfish from a grow-out pond for everyone to see.

We actively encourage our customers to consider including goldfish in their pond, and we believe that our passion for goldfish should be shared by all pond owners. Considering their rich history, hardiness and beauty, we believe goldfish are a great addition to any pond!

About the Author



Rick Gann has worked for Blackwater Creek Koi Farm since 2018. He manages the farm's we band marketing team as well as being their chief goat herder. Rick and his team have personally photographed thousands of koi and goldfish for the farm's website and have answered just as many koi and goldfish questions from their amazing customers.

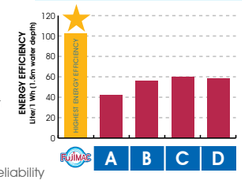




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Pond Innovation

And Now For Something **Completely Different**

A cheaper, faster, game-changing innovation in pond design

by Kole Loveday,
SelectPonds

Concrete ponds and liners were always the go-to for koi pond enthusiasts, but for Hunter Nieman, they lacked something. His journey into the koi fish and pond-building world began at a time when he was searching for something more. He discovered koi fish and was struck by the peacefulness of their graceful movement and vibrant colors. What started as an interest quickly turned into a passion. Soon, Hunter was importing koi from Japan, driven by a desire to share the calmness they brought to him with others.

With this vision in mind, he opened a shop in Seymour, Tennessee, where he began selling koi to enthusiasts across the country. But koi alone didn't satisfy him. He wanted to create something complete — a full experience for







Hunter found himself questioning the limits of traditional pond materials. Liners, while popular, had their drawbacks, and concrete, though durable, was costly and limited in size.

clients that showcased not only the beauty of koi but the peace of the ponds they lived in. SelectKoi and SelectPonds were born from this ambition: SelectKoi focused on providing high-quality koi, and SelectPonds aimed at building, maintaining and enhancing the ponds for these unique fish.

As Hunter gained experience, he began connecting with koi collectors and breeders worldwide. Eventually, his dedication caught the attention of respected breeders, including Dainichi, one of Japan's top breeders known as the "Lamborghini of the koi world." They asked him to represent their koi in America, a sign of trust that underscored his growing influence in the koi community. With his koi reputation solidifying, Hunter's drive for creating better ponds only grew.

An Unplanned Partnership

Years and numerous projects later, Hunter needed help managing his ideas. That's when Thom Karlowicz entered the picture. Thom, a landscaper, pond builder, irrigation expert and water artist with over 26 years of experience, arrived one Tuesday seemingly out of nowhere. Originally from Oregon, Thom was enthusiastic about water features and ponds, and his easygoing personality paired with his serious dedication to his work made him a perfect fit. It didn't take long for Hunter to see that Thom was the right person to bring his vision to life.

Before Thom joined, Hunter had already completed a series of ponds that were both serene and eye catching. Concrete pond projects in New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky added to his portfolio, drawing attention from viewers and koi enthusiasts alike. Soon, he started sharing his journey on social media, and to his surprise, his work took off. YouTube, Instagram and Facebook audiences were captivated not only by the ponds but by the koi as well.

On one rainy fall day, Hunter found himself questioning the limits of traditional pond materials. Liners, while popular, had their drawbacks, and concrete, though durable, was costly and limited in size.

These renderings (left) showcase the versatility of pond design, from sleek, modern minimalism to serene coastal aesthetics and bold contemporary styles, each tailored to its unique environment.



A top-down view of the world's first PolyPond construction process in Roanoke, Virginia, showcasing its unique shape and layout in progress.

The idea hit him: what if there was a way to use plastic to create ponds that could be molded into any size, shape or design? Inspired, Hunter began researching, exploring the potential for a new type of pond that would defy traditional materials.

Enter PolyPond

This research led Hunter to experiment with a new idea — what would eventually become the PolyPond. The project began with plastic sheets and a welder, starting as a simple photography tub to make it easier for his photographer to capture shots of koi. Unexpectedly, the project revealed that plastic could effectively hold water. That success sparked a bigger question: could they scale up the concept and build a large, plastic pond without liners?

After the tub's initial success, Hunter brought in Thom to help develop the concept. Together, they aimed to construct a larger pond, one that would sit in front of the SelectKoi shop as a real-world demonstration of their approach. They dug out space, planning for this front pond to become a focal feature, but as the



project advanced, they ran into issues. The welds weren't holding, and the structure showed signs of weakness, which led them to question if their idea could hold up on a larger scale.

Determined to make it work, they looked into advanced techniques that might solve the problem. Hunter sought out welding classes, only to find that every course in the United States was fully booked.

The Koi Whisperer

Feeling frustrated, he reached out to his mentor, Nico Dervisaj, known in koi circles as the "Koi Whisperer."

Nico, owner of Koi World in Belgium, is a respected figure in the koi community, known for his extensive knowledge, love of koi and humorous yet grounded personality. As luck would have it, Nico had experience with plastic welding and recommended a course in Belgium. Encouraged by Nico's advice, Hunter and Thom packed their bags and flew to Belgium, where they spent weeks learning specialized techniques like extrusion welding and butt fusion. Every challenge in Belgium was a lesson, and when they returned, they were ready to bring the PolyPond concept to life.

Back home, they got to work rewelding each joint, reinforcing the structure and ensuring the pond







Here are three distinct styles: SelectKoi's signature front pond at dusk (left), the sleek coastal design (middle), and the charming cottage garden (right).

was watertight. After months of adjustments and problem-solving, the PolyPond finally took shape. But they didn't stop there. They created a smaller, portable version — an 800-gallon, above-ground PolyPond. With this model complete, they decided to showcase it at the All-American Koi Show in Las Vegas.

The timing wasn't perfect. They faced delays with a Japanese koi shipment, and a client in Nashville was awaiting a delivery. Despite these obstacles, the team managed to coordinate everything. The transport team handled the Nashville delivery at 4 a.m., and shortly afterward, they hit the road for Las Vegas.

A Welcome New Approach

In Las Vegas, the PolyPond drew immediate attention. People were intrigued by this new take on pond construction, and of course, the koi helped pull in the crowd. But more than just showcasing the pond, Hunter and his team shared the story of its creation — the months of dedication, the setbacks and the determination that brought them to that point. During the show, Hunter came up with another idea: offering certified installers who could help set up PolyPonds across the country, making it easier for others to bring this innovative approach to their own ponds.

That first installation marked a new chapter for SelectPonds. The PolyPond wasn't just an experiment; it was a fresh approach to pond building.

Shortly after the show, SelectPonds secured its first PolyPond client, marking the shift from prototype to a full-scale project. Hunter, Thom and their team set to work on blueprints, gathered materials and assembled a crew to tackle the project. The completed installation — a unique, three-circle pond connected by two stone bridges and a wooden bridge — reflected the care and precision that had gone into the PolyPond from the start. The result was serene yet functional, with an elegant design that created a tranquil symmetry.

That first installation marked a new chapter for SelectPonds. The PolyPond wasn't just an experiment; it was a fresh approach to pond building. With trained crews now ready to install PolyPonds nationwide with easy-to-follow instructions for DIY enthusiasts, the PolyPond opened new possibilities for koi lovers and water-feature enthusiasts alike.

About the Author



Kole Loveday, a spirited creative from Dandridge, Tennessee, graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he sharpened his skills in graphic design, photography, videography and journalism. On a quest to find his passion, Kole discovered SelectKoi and SelectPonds, diving headfirst into the world of koi fish. As he learned about koi breeds and picked up Japanese along the way, Kole became much more than just a photographer and designer. Known affectionately as "Koi Boy," he is now an integral part of the SelectKoi team, capturing photos and managing weekly koi shipments.



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Takumi Miyatora pulls out a very successful Azukari koi for Shawn McHenry of Mystic Koi.

The THRILL of the Hunt

Dealers race to Japan for the 2025 season

by Stephen Tuazon,
W. Lim Corporation

It's a wild time to be a koi enthusiast in America. As the 2025 All-American Koi Show season approaches, koi dealers are flocking to Japan with dreams of landing "The One" — you know, the koi that stops people in their tracks, with patterns so perfect that it could hang in an art museum (assuming the museum could afford them).

Rumors are already swirling about koi changing hands for jaw-dropping prices, with some dealers whispering about fish valued between $600,000 and $800,000. Yes, that's the price of a luxury home swimming in your pond!

But this isn't just about dollar signs. It's about prestige, passion and a little bit of koi-kichi magic.

Seeking Perfection in Japan

For these dealers, traveling to Japan is a mix of business, passion and just the right amount of chaos. This time of year, Japanese breeders — like the famed Sakai, Dainichi, Koda, Marujyu, Torazo and Marudo koi farms — drain their mud ponds,





Shintaro lets Shane Hemphill transfer Showa koi from mud pond to greenhouse.

Hobbyist and Art of the Yard contractor Shane Hemphill (left) picks out koi at Sekiguchi Koi Farm for his clients. A lifelong business partnership (below) begins to blossom! AAKS Koi Dealer of the Year Shawn McHenry (Mystic Koi) & Masato Hoshino (Koda Koi Farm) grew up together, building a friendship beyond koi and business.





Dainichi picks his personal favorite for a big upcoming American koi show.

revealing their prized fish. These ponds are where koi grow large and develop their dazzling patterns, often unseen until harvest.

Once the koi are unveiled, it's a bidding frenzy. (Think of it like a Sotheby's auction, but with more splashing.) Dealers inspect body shape, color intensity and lineage, all while trying not to outbid their budgets. The stakes are high, because winning a top-tier koi in Japan could mean stealing the spotlight in Vegas!

And for those wondering — yes, it's true. There are rumors of koi fetching upwards of $800,000 this year. The American koi world has officially entered the realm of supercars and fine art.

Insider Access

In the koi world, success isn't just about spotting a great fish — it's about earning access to it. Dealers with strong, longstanding relationships with Japan's most prestigious breeders often secure koi of a quality that others can only dream of. These relationships built on trust and mutual respect give them first pick of the best fish during harvest season, ensuring they bring home koi with true championship potential.

What sets the top dealers apart is their connection to the Shinkokai, the Japanese professional koi breeders' association. As members, these dealers adhere to the highest standards of quality, ethics and expertise, solidifying their status as leaders in the industry. Through Shinkokai, they gain access to Japan's top farms and breeders, where premium koi are raised using techniques honed over centuries.

This insider access allows these dealers not only to import world-class koi but also to educate and inspire American hobbyists. By introducing koi of unparalleled quality, they are raising the bar for the U.S. koi scene, bringing the beauty and culture of Japanese koi keeping to enthusiasts across the nation.

These dealers don't just sell koi. They're on a mission to elevate the art form. And that mission starts in Japan.

Reigniting the Passion

2024 was a turning point for koi enthusiasts across the U.S. After years of challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the koi hobby saw a resurgence with shows springing back to life. From longstanding events making their triumphant returns to exciting koi fests and national competitions, the energy around koi shows has reignited the passion of hobbyists everywhere.

For koi lovers, these events are more than competitions. They're a chance to immerse themselves in the beauty and artistry of the hobby. The thrill of hunting for the perfect koi, learning from seasoned experts and connecting with a vibrant community of fellow enthusiasts are what keep them coming back. Whether you're a seasoned competitor or just starting out, koi shows offer a rare opportunity to see fish that inspire awe and spark dreams of raising a future champion.

These events have become hubs for education, inspiration and connection. Shows like the All-American Koi Show are now even offering expert panels, hands-on workshops and live demonstrations! These koi shows provide opportunities to deepen knowledge of koi care, pond design and water quality. They also foster camaraderie, bringing together backyard hobbyists, aspiring competitors and serious collectors to share their passion and experiences.

It's the excitement of seeing koi like you've never seen before, the joy of connecting with like-minded individuals, and the thrill of discovering new possibilities that keep hobbyists hooked. Whether a local event or a national competition, koi shows continue to fuel the dreams and passion of the koi community across the country.

The All-American Koi Show

Since its explosive debut in 2024, the All-American Koi Show set new standards for koi competitions in the U.S. Hosted in the glitzy heart of Las Vegas, this show is more than a competition; it's a spectacle. Last year's event stunned attendees with koi valued at over $200,000, showcasing a level of quality rarely, if ever, seen by American hobbyists or professionals.

But the 2025 show promises to outdo itself. This year, they're going big — not just in fish quality, but in scope. Classes for contractors are being added to the lineup, focusing on koi keeping, koi pond design, filtration systems and the art of creating backyard paradises. From first-time pond builders to seasoned pros and hobbyists, there's something for everyone. Imagine learning pond-design tips from the top dogs in the industry while million-dollar koi glide by in nearby tanks.

As koi dealers return from Japan with their prized finds, the countdown to koi season and the largest U.S. koi show begins. Behind the scenes, koi are pampered like royalty, with pristine water quality, top-notch diets and prep sessions to enhance their beauty. All this will prepare them to dazzle both the Japanese judges and spectators. By the time they hit the show floor, these koi will be nothing short of breathtaking.

The All-American Koi Show isn't just a competition — it's a celebration of art, passion and the incredible journey that brings these living jewels to the world stage. Whether you're a dealer, a hobbyist or just someone who loves the idea of a fish worth more than a Ferrari, this is one event you won't want to miss.

For koi enthusiasts, this event isn't just a show — it's a celebration of a shared passion for one of the most beautiful and culturally rich fish in the world. As koi swim under the bright lights of Las Vegas, they will embody the dedication and artistry of breeders, dealers and caretakers alike.

With Japan the heartbeat of the industry and America the stage for rising stars, the future of competitive koi shows looks brighter than ever!

Stephen Tuazon is a graphic designer and media manager at W. Lim Corporation, where he creates impactful and creative visual designs to support the company's branding and marketing initiatives, which include the All-American Koi Show.

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Fitz's Fish Ponds Expands with Two New Retail Locations: Chattanooga, TN & Saddle River, NJ

Fitz's Fish Ponds is thrilled to announce a significant expansion with the opening of two new retail locations in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Saddle River, New Jersey. These exciting developments mark a new chapter in FFP's mission to bring exceptional pond care, products and expertise to an even wider audience.





When the opportunity arose to acquire Aquanooga/Watergarden LLC, a beloved local pond store in Chattanooga, Brian Fitzsimmons, CEO and owner of Fitz's Fish Ponds, saw a chance to preserve its legacy. Known for its dedicated customer base and quality products, Aquanooga was a cornerstone for pond enthusiasts in the region. Fitzsimmons emphasized the importance of continuing to serve the Chattanooga community.

The New Jersey location carries a deep historical significance. Formerly known as Waterford Gardens, this property was once the home of William Tricker, a pioneering figure in the commercial waterlily industry in the United States. For over a century, Waterford Gardens stood as a landmark in the pond and water-garden industry, revered for its innovation and quality. Fitzsimmons remarked, "This location is steeped in history. We plan to restore its greenhouses, ponds and grounds to honor its past while creating a thriving destination for modern-day pond enthusiasts."

Both new locations will reflect the quality and selection customers have come to expect from FFP's existing retail stores. Each will feature an exceptional array of products, including Japanese koi, aquatic plants and state-of-the-art pond supplies. Fitz's Fish Ponds invites customers, both new and longstanding, to visit these new locations and experience the dedication, expertise and passion that define the FFP brand.

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New Products Announced by EasyPro

EasyPro Pond Products is excited to announce the release of their 2025 catalogs and great new products! EasyPro has collaborated with some of the premier recreational pond builders across the country to offer improved products to create your rec ponds. New offerings in this area include swim-rated pumps, thicker 60-mil EPDM DuraLiner, stronger, 10-oz. underlayment, rock pads, and a new, innovative wetland filtration system that is fueled by the Pit Viper Wetland Filtration Diffuser. These new advancements are designed to save you an incredible amount of time, labor and materials in building your wetland pond filters. Complete rec pond and wetland filter kits will also be available for simplicity.

EasyPro is also announcing that they are the exclusive source in the industry for the amazing new Gast Sound Shield technology! With this technology, you can offer your customers the quietest rocking-piston aeration systems for larger ponds and lakes. It's quiet like you've never heard before! Sound Shield conversion kits are also available to quickly and easily quiet most existing EasyPro SRC compressors. Check out the video at www.easypro.com.

And last, but certainly not least, EasyPro is proud to be a new master distributor of CAST Lighting. CAST designs and manufactures best-in-class, low-voltage landscape lighting that endures the most demanding environments.

Elevate your game in 2025 with EasyPro Pond Products!

www.easypro.com, 800/448-3873

2025 Water Garden Expo - The Largest Free Education Event in the Industry!

Pondliner Wholesale's Water Garden Expo is scheduled for March 5 – 7, 2025, at the Grand Casino Hotel and Resort in Shawnee, Oklahoma. The Water Garden Expo brings together the largest number industry manufacturers exhibiting in one event with more than 25 educational seminars and unmatched networking opportunities.

Wednesday afternoon features educational seminars including with Stacy Pruitt with GSN Partners teaching a two-part Elevate EPDM training session. A happy hour will follow with a chance to network and visit the manufacturer booths.





The presentation of POND Trade's 2024 Water Artisans of the Year will kick off Thursday morning. Dave Duensing headlines the WGE with three seminars on Thursday that will be beneficial for installers of all skill levels. Topics include getting the most impact with rocks and stones and waterfall and pond-construction techniques. Kelly Billing will also lead us through another great seminar on designing with aquatic plants.

The Pond Digger Eric Triplett, Greg Gant with PerformancePro Pumps, Larry Carnes with Reflections Water Gardens and Frayne McAtee with Atlantic-Oase are among those scheduled to lead other seminars on Thursday. A happy hour concludes the scheduled events followed by an evening of networking.

Other seminars include a recap of the recreational pond build, internet marketing with B.J. Linger with Outdoor Network Services, and pond-maintenance programs by Laura Reale with PondTent. Eric Triplett will also lead a contractor forum featuring widely respected water-feature builders.

For those looking for a hands-on build, the Pond Professional Alliance will host a recreational pond build in Krebs, Oklahoma, on March 3 – 4. Go to www.pondprofessionalsalliance.org and click on the Events tab, or call 512/423-5328 for more information and to register for the build.

The Water Garden Expo is free to attend and open to trade professionals only. Visit www.wgexpo.com or call 866/219-3561 to register or for more information.



Aquascape Inc. Honors Top Pond Builder with Prestigious Artist of the Year Award

Aquascape is thrilled to present its Artist of the Year award to Rob and Kevin Fuentes of TranquilityScapes in Wantagh, New York. This prestigious award is given each year to a Certified Aquascape Contractor who exemplifies outstanding artistry and skill in water-feature design and construction.

The Aquascape Artist of the Year is selected by Aquascape and its network of certified contractors worldwide. Recipients of this honor stand out for their distinctive style and are leaders in the decorative water-feature industry.

To earn this award, regional winners are initially chosen and celebrated by their peers. From this list, Aquascape and past Artist of the Year recipients collaborate to select the ultimate winner.

The 2024 regional winners include:

- TranquilityScapes in Wantagh, NY – overall winner
- Natural Scapes in Chapin, SC
- Pond King Water Gardens in Eagan, MN
- River Rock Water Gardens in Stilwell, OK
- Seeds of Nature Watergardens in Merlin, OR
- Streamworks Designs in West Vancouver, British Columbia
- Reach Rock Art in Melbourne, Victoria
- McQueen Landscapes in Dumfermline Fife, U.K.

For information about Aquascape Inc., visit www.aquascapeinc.com.

Work Alongside Industry Leaders to Learn Advanced Swim-Pond Construction Techniques



Envisioned by Shaun Lindley as a tribute to his wife and grandchildren and organized by the Pond Professionals Alliance, this 40-by-80 swim pond build on March 3 – 4 will be one to remember! Designed and led by Craig McBride (Swim Pond and All Aquatics) and Larry Carnes (Reflections Water Gardens) in the days leading up to Water Garden Expo, this project will utilize a unique hybrid-filtration approach and include the following exciting components:

- Newly released, material-reducing wetland filtration components, drastically reducing the amount of gravel needed for wetland construction
- Updated user-friendly ozone system
- Walk-in sandy beach area
- Massive, handpicked boulders, natural stone steps and jumping rocks
- Sheer vertical walls using stained, precast Verti-Blocks.

Join us to build community, strengthen our industry, and learn new techniques in Krebs, Oklahoma (approximately 100 miles from Shawnee).
form.jotform.com/pondprosalliance/wge-group-build-registration



Aquilty Systems Inc. Announces New EasyFill Ultra Line of Miniature Electronic Autofill Systems

Aquility Systems Inc., an international industry leader in auto-fill technology, announced a new Level Waters EasyFill ULTRA MCU-21 control/sensor for fountains, ponds and water features.

The new EasyFill X ULTRA MCU-21 control/sensor will have all the great features of the standard EasyFill with some extra features usually only found on high-end electronic systems.

"Customers always liked the small size of the EasyFill but needed a way to delay the fill to avoid cycling. The EasyFill ULTRA offers this important feature along with a failsafe to stop the fill if something goes wrong," explained Hollye Merton, founder-president of Aquility Systems.

The new sensor will rival the features of systems that require bulky controllers and is only slightly larger than the original sensor. It will fit in the existing slide and skimmer mounts also. It provides an approximate 10-to-20-second delay as a wave compensator to minimize cycling as well as a third probe positioned about 1/4 inch above the sensing probes that will cut the fill off if the water reaches it. Another new feature is the easy-clean probes that make it a snap to maintain. Just like the standard EasyFill, the EasyFill ULTRA will be supplied in two wiring configurations — the simplified wiring (MCX-21) version and the 4-wire (MCU-22) version. With all the new features in the EasyFill ULTRA, customers will enjoy the added peace of mind for their filling needs.

Made exclusively in the U.S., the EasyFill ULTRA fulfills a growing need for quality domestic products and is the only self-contained controller/sensor on the market. The new sensor allows existing systems to be easily upgraded using the current power and valves installed on the older standard system. It will also be offered in similar system configurations as before with the MSU-1424 8-gpm, MSU-3424 15-gpm and MSU-1024 30-gpm systems. Systems will include control sensor, power transformer, valve, wiring accessory kit, cleaning brush and user manual. LUX-450 and LUX-1000 systems come with everything except the valve. MSRP will start at $159.95 for the standalone control/sensor. The MNT-EZ/SLU slide mount is available for easy mounting (sold separately).

For more information or distributor pricing, contact the company at 352/332-1549 or at info@aquilitysystems.com. Visit our website at www.aquilitysystems.com.

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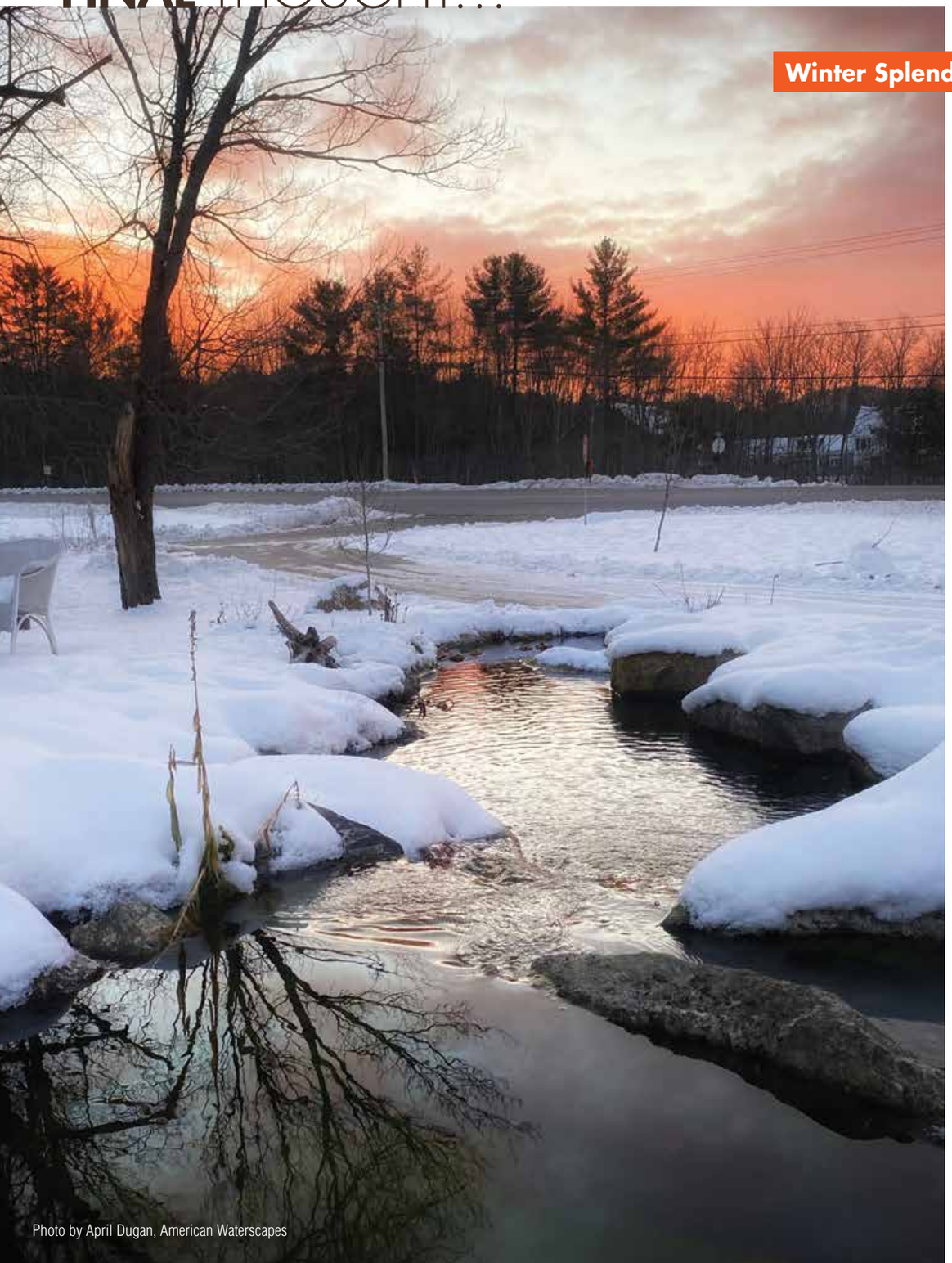
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Advertisers' Index

Apex Distribution 2
Aquacide 57
Aquascape 38
Aquatic Construction Services 7
Atlantic / Oase 60
Bassinger Fisheries 29
Bergen Water Gardens 56
Bluegreen Marketing 53
EasyPro Pond Products 30,31
EasyPro Pond Products 14
Evolution Aqua USA, Inc. 59
Fitz's Fish Ponds, LLC 59
GC Tek 49
Grand Koi 3
Hikari Sales 43
Kloubec Koi Farm 37, 56
Kodama Koi Farm 57
Koi Pharma 43
Koi Smart Pond Supply 18
Laguna Hagen 44
Lindley Stone 18
Microbe-Lift 20
Netherland Bulb 50
Nitto Kohki 12
PerformancePro Pumps 7
Practical Pond Wholesale 56
Pondliner 16
Select Ponds 40
ShinMaywa 48
Ten Mile Creek Nursery 39
Water Becomes a Garden 53
W. Lim Corporation 15
Zeigler 25

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Winter Splendor

Photo by April Dugan, American Waterscapes





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Shawnee, OK - March 5-7

ALL AMERICAN KOI SHOW
Las Vegas, NV - March 29-30

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