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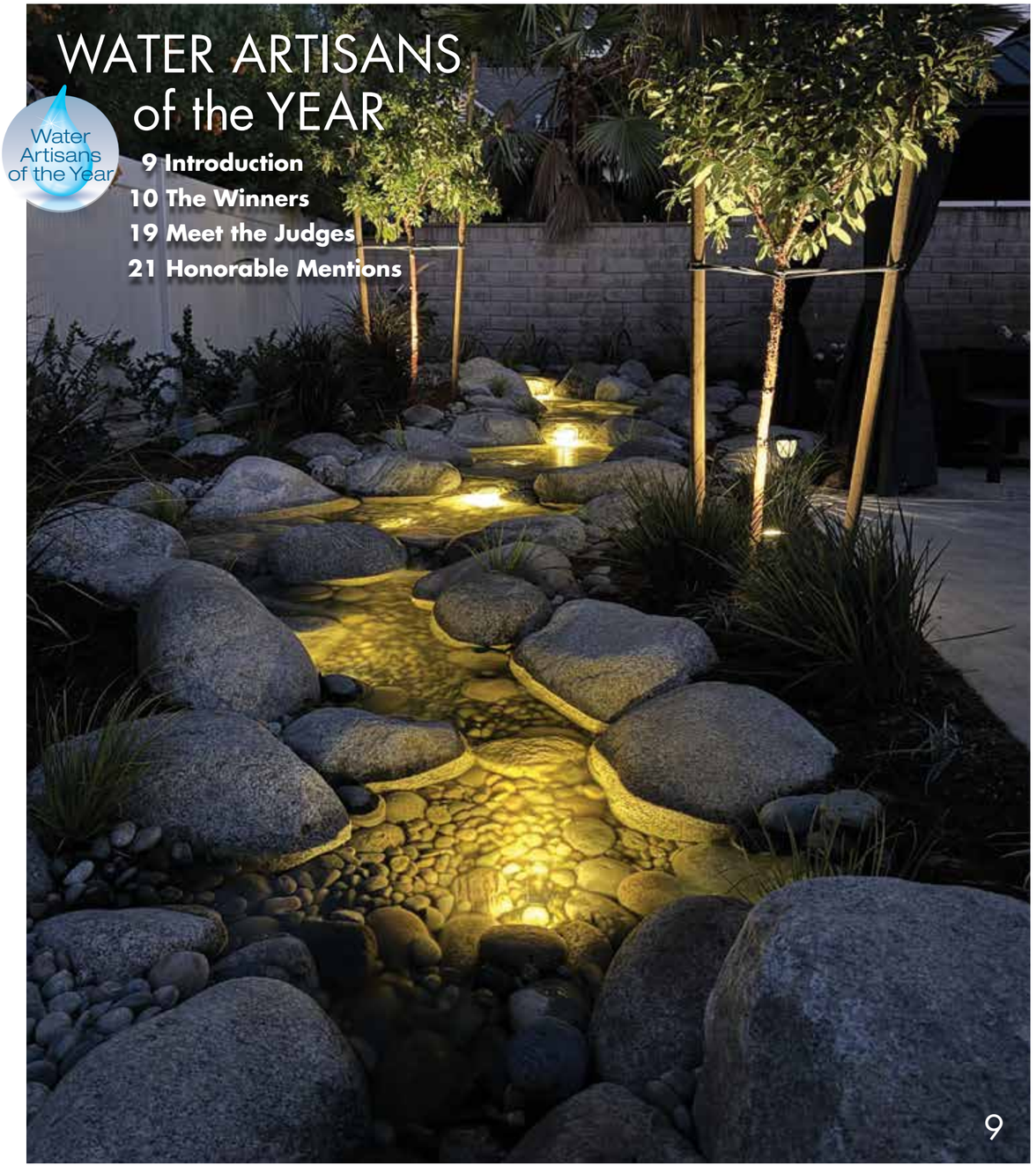
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Water Artisans of the Year

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Upcoming **Events**

2025

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

April 27 - 29
ZNA Carolina Koi Show
Raleigh Elks Lodge #753
Raleigh, North Carolina
www.znacarolina.com

June 28 - August 9
KC Water Garden Society Tour
Various locations over five weekends
www.kcwatergardens.com

July 31 - August 3
Pond Professionals Alliance Training
Easy Pro Headquarters
Grant, Michigan
www.pondprofessionalsalliance.com

August 12 - 16
IWGS Symposiom
New York City, New York
www.iwgs.org

August 22 - 23
Koi Fest 2025 & Tri-State ZNA Koi Show
Fitz's Fish Pond Farm
Milford, New Jersey
www.fitzfishponds.com

August 28 - 31
Rocky Mountain Koi Show
Douglas Couny Fairgrounds
Castle Rock, Colorado
www.rockymountainkoiclub.org

October 22 - 24
Hardscapes North America
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.hardscapena.com

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Publisher's Perspective

I Bid You Adieu



Yes, it's true. This will be my last issue as the publisher and owner of POND Trade magazine. It has been my pleasure meeting and working with so many of you over the past 12 years. Whether it was by meeting and chatting with you at a conference or trade show, contacting and working with you about writing an article, or picking your brain about a topic, thank you for your role in this journey.

I'd also like to give a shout out to all my loyal advertisers that have supported me over the years to produce this magazine, which would not be at all possible without you. Thank you!

I'm making way for Lauren Nolan, who will be taking over as of March 6. My retirement will be officially announced at the Water Garden Expo in Shawnee, Oklahoma, where you will have the opportunity to meet Lauren. I am very satisfied with the transition, and I'm extremely confident that Lauren will do a great job. (I wouldn't be handing over my baby if I didn't think so!) Lauren is excited to take the reins, and I'm excited to see what she has in store for us going forward!

I'm honored that I will also have the pleasure of presenting the awards to the newest crop of Water Artisan of the Year contest winners at the Water Garden Expo. Turn to page 8 to see who won. This was the ninth year we held the contest, and we had a bumper crop of amazing talent in four categories that should provide some inspiration as you start gearing up for the spring building season.

This issue is over 70 pages and awash with content you won't want to overlook. For example, did you know how dangerous feeding ducks near a pond can be? ("Duck, Duck, GONE!" pg. 45) Carolyn Weise tells us how to avoid the perils of an over-crowded pond ("No Vacancy," pg. 38). Finally, in an issue full of winners, check out the best new bloomers at the latest IWGS New Waterlily Competition (pg. 56).

Again, thanks for making the last 12 years some of the best of my working career. See you by the pond!

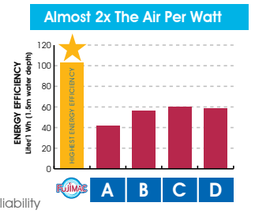
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Water Artisans of the Year Winners

Celebrating nine years of the industry's elite

by Jordan Morris,
Editor, POND Trade magazine

In any competition, it's so very important to provide a level playing field for everybody involved. As we honor, recognize and showcase last pond season's best of the best water-feature projects from around the globe, it is refreshing to know that they were chosen anonymously, without any corporate sponsorship or influence. That's why the Water Artisans of the Year contest is so special — each project's artistry really has to speak for itself!

This year, three of our four winners enjoyed their first victory in the contest. The fourth frontrunner, Eric Arntson, joined industry colleagues Tim Wood, Bobby Kenyon, Shane Hemphill and Heath Webb in the triple crown club by securing his third win. Congratulations, Eric — you're in great company!

As in previous years, we collected project submissions and presented them to an independent judging panel with no brand names or contractors' identities revealed. (Meet the judges on pg. 19!) We solicited entries in three of our most popular categories from previous years — Best Pondless, Most Naturalistic and Fountains & Formal Features — and introduced a new category, Recreational Ponds.

We required a $25 fee with every submission, which culminated in approximately $1,200 donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, an award-winning charity that provides cutting-edge treatment to children without requiring payment.

Enjoy these spectacular highlights from the 2024 pond season!

Meet the judges! Page 19

WINNER

Fountains & Formal Features



Ryan Farnol

Ryan Farnol is the owner of Platinum Ponds & Landscaping, a premier water feature and outdoor living designer and installer in West Michigan. He specializes in creating custom ponds, waterfalls, fountains and other water features that enhance the beauty and tranquility of any outdoor area. This is his first win in the contest.

Four 24-by-24-inch floating steps traverse the pond just above the surface of the water and immerse you in the flurry of activity around you perpetuated by a robust spillway bowl centerpiece, intake bay, three aeration jets and a 48-inch spillway through an elevated water wall. An 8-by-10 wetland filter works its magic within the pond footprint. Straight lines and smooth surfaces make this project "pop" in its natural surroundings.

The water itself is highly oxygenated and filled with beautiful aquatic plants such as lilies, lotus, iris, pickerel rush and more. But if you ask Farnol, it's the floating steps that steal the show.

"They are the most amazing part of the pond," he says. "We built them by pouring concrete into a footer with sono tubes and rebar running through it to serve as the anchor."

Water Artisans of the Year



WINNER **Pondless**



Stan Suh

Stan Suh's company, Flow Landscape of Corona, California, is comprised of a uniquely passionate team that is dedicated to building nature-inspired ecosystem ponds and water features. This is Stan's first Water Artisans of the Year victory.

This tranquil, elegant backyard feature that electrifies the backyard at night was built for Peggy, who had recently moved from Georgia to Southern California to be closer to her son's family and two grandsons. Although Peggy had found herself adjusting to the West Coast, she still had Georgia on her mind, longing for the peaceful waterfront views from her lakeside home.

Stan Suh and his team were commissioned to recreate that tranquility with a low-maintenance water feature, and the result was this enthralling pondless waterfall and stream. Although this was the third water-feature installation on the property, it has quickly become the standout favorite among her family and guests.

Now, from her living room and favorite chair, Peggy can enjoy a beautiful view of the water feature while she dreams of yesteryear in the Peach State.





WINNER



Most Naturalistic

Eric Arntson

Eric Arntson founded Stonebridge Landscape in 2003, with the goal of creating breathtaking outdoor spaces that make a lasting impression. His dedication to craftsmanship, simple flowing lines and use of natural material have informed his unique, organic style of landscape design. This is his third win in our contest.

Here's an excellent reason to get involved with your local pond society. Thanks to Eric Arntson's contributions to his local chapter, he managed to meet and sign up an excellent new client who hired his company to undergo a $185,000 complete front and backyard landscape renovation.

The result might leave you wondering exactly where you are. This sprawling, natural-looking habitat certainly doesn't feel like it's in the heat of a Texas summer!

The water is 4 ½ feet at its deepest and holds 4,000 gallons kept tidy with a full aeration system complete with jets. The 15-foot stream incorporates a signature bridge, fish caves, and fish grottos that amass 24 tons of limestone boulders, including 5 tons of oversized limestone. Native lilies were planted in dedicated pockets, as lily pots could compromise the natural vibe of this bionomical work of art.

WINNER

Recreational Ponds



Chris Thompson

Chris Thompson built his first waterfall in 2005, which sparked the idea for his company, Just Add Water, which he founded in 2006. He has since crafted hundreds of water features, with a dedication to quality and a passion for perfecting his craft. This is Chris' first contest win.

The homeowners considered themselves big koi lovers but were limited by their small, indoor tanks. So, they reached out to the Just Add Water team with a tall order: a spacious, natural pond that could house all their cherished fish and accommodate occasional visits from the owners.

Water Artisans of the Year

As you can see in the photos, they certainly got what they asked for. Chris Thompson and his team crafted a beautiful countryside recreation pond outfitted with a wetland filter and intake bay to keep the water crystal clear for the koi (and their humans) to thrive. This expansive backyard hangout truly is one of a kind and the perfect marriage of naturalistic koi pond and swimming pond.

This household is now awash in peaceful moments swimming alongside their fish in a serene, outdoor environment designed for relaxation and beauty, serving as a true sanctuary for both koi and owners alike.





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The **Judges**



Top row, left to right: Paul Cole, EasyPro Pond Products, B.J. Linger, Outdoor Network Services, Bradley Blocksom, Pondscapes of Charlotte. Bottom row, left to right: Tim Wood, Aquatic Edge, James Lavery, Atlantic-Oase, Thomas VanAmerongen, Niagra Waterscapes.

Aquatic Adjudicators

Industry experts & past winners serve on judging panel

by Jordan Morris,
Editor, POND Trade magazine

The "Supreme Stream Court" is stacked each year with a unique, well rounded cross section of the pond world and always includes select winners from previous contests. This year, the POND Trade Editorial Committee nominated two winners from our 2023 contest, two award-winning designers and two high-profile representatives from pond-product manufacturers. Each judge reviewed blind entries and selected a winner and runner-up in each of the four categories — Formal Features & Fountains, Best Pondless, Most Naturalistic and — new this year — Recreational Ponds.

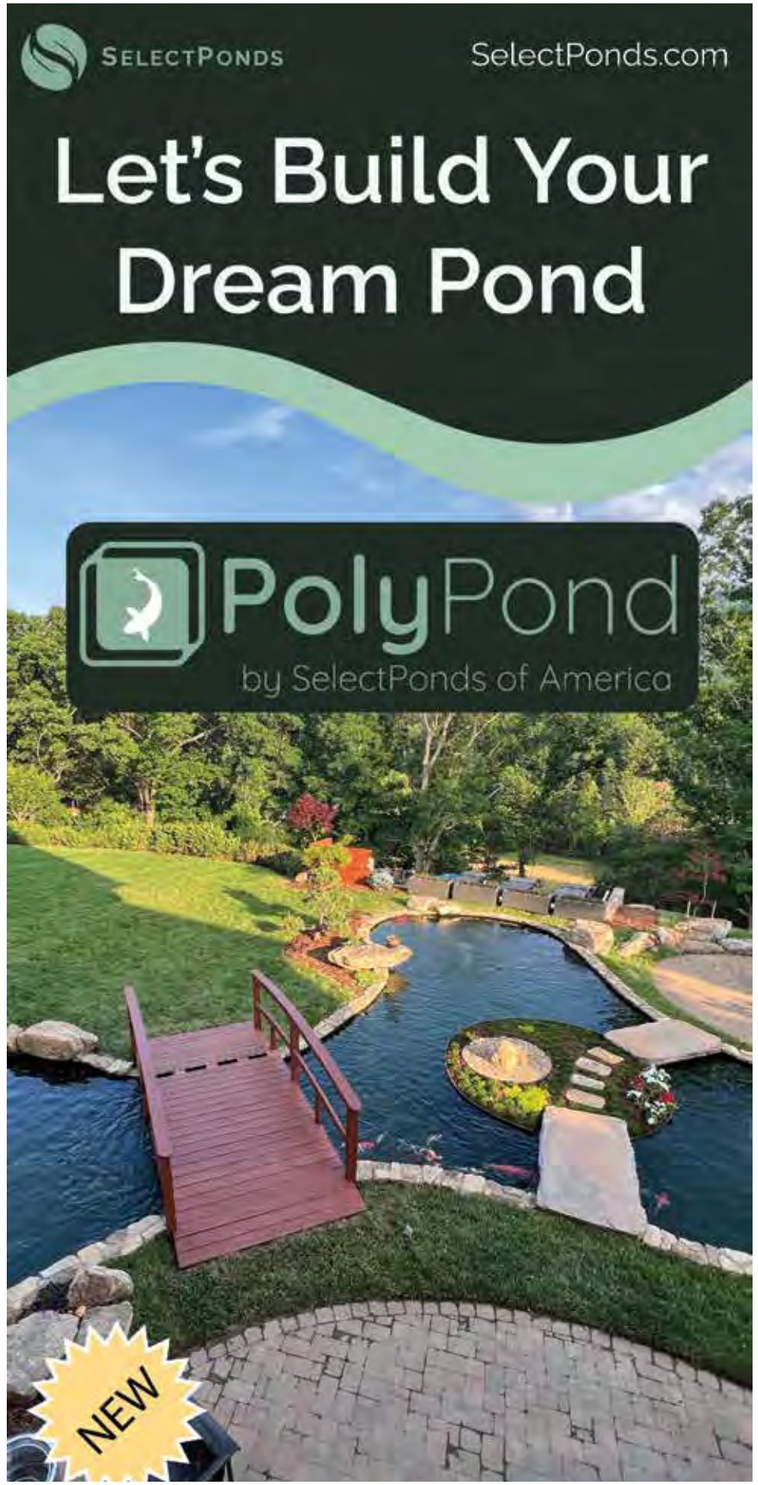
To be eligible, projects must have been completed between Nov. 1, 2023 and Nov. 1, 2024. We accepted multiple entries from the same contractor; however, each project could only be submitted in one category for consideration. POND Trade magazine's editorial staff collected the judges' rankings for each of the four categories and calculated the winners.

The judges who served on this year's panel were:

Bradley Blocksom is a 2023 contest winner in the Best Under $20k category and one of our youngest winners to date. Under the guidance and direction of his father Dave Blocksom, who started Pondscapes of Charlotte in 2002, Bradley has helped grow the company and plans to transition to an ownership role in the near future. Bradley enjoys building water features and loves being part of a team of motivated young individuals.

Paul Cole is the president and chief executive officer of EasyPro Pond Products. He has a strong passion for the future of the water-feature industry and a deep appreciation for the incredible design work and water features that talented contractors are able to create. When Paul isn't working, he enjoys hunting, fishing and enjoying the great outdoors.

James Lavery has been with Atlantic-Oase for



14 years, during which time he has enjoyed a front-row seat to the company's exceptional growth. Now the national sales manager, James was involved in the recent Atlantic-Oase corporate merger, which reshaped the industry. He seeks to set a new standard within the industry by working among an exceptional team.

B.J. Linger is known for his highly detailed, out-of-the-box water feature designs. He has more than 20 years of experience in the pond world and was the inaugural Aquascape Water Feature Artist of the Year in 2011. He is the co-owner of Outdoor Network Services, a website design and marketing company that has launched hundreds of websites and marketing strategies for pond and landscape contractors and retailers all over the United States.

Thomas VanAmerongen won in the Most Naturalistic category in 2023. He is the owner of Niagara Waterscapes in Ontario, Canada, which he founded in 2022. With a passion for natural stone, he has fallen in love with the creativity of visualizing and placing each stone with a purpose. He specializes in creating natural ponds, waterfalls and fountains to bring out the natural beauty on any property and believes that every water feature project is a new opportunity to create something completely unique.

Tim Wood, a three-time contest winner and veteran of the Supreme Stream Court, started Aquatic Edge in 2010 and has over 20 years of experience in the pond industry. Tim and his team are Master Certified Aquascape Contractors, 2016, 2017 and 2021 Water Artisans of the Year Award recipients, 2020 Aquascape Inc. Artist of the Year, and 2023 Aquascape Conservationist of the Year. Aquatic Edge is a full-service water garden design, repair and installation company in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area.

Runners-Up

The Second Best

Honorable projects worth mentioning

by Jordan Morris,
Editor, POND Trade magazine

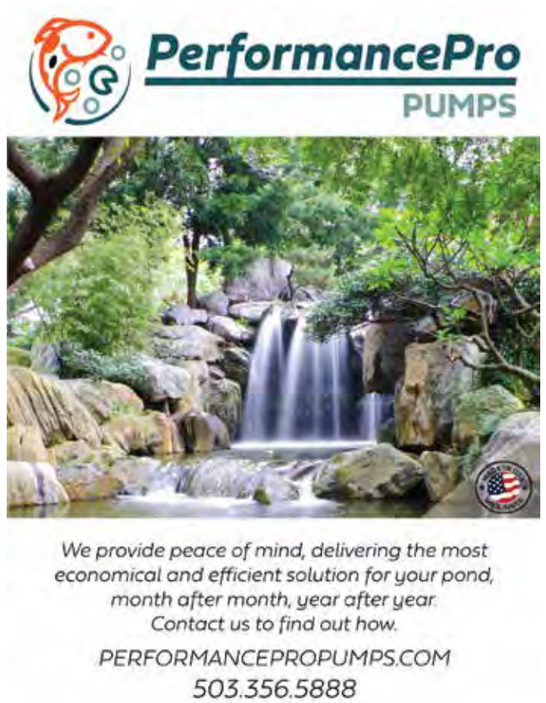
We relish celebrating our "silver medalists" every year, because sometimes the final vote tallies differ by just one or two votes. As you will see on the following pages, sometimes "second best" is a mere stone's throw from top honors!

POND Trade magazine is proud to host the independent, unsponsored Water Artisans of the Year contest on an annual basis. This provides a level playing field for all contractors, regardless of company size or affiliation, and recognizes the year's most impressive projects that set the bar in pond construction. We'd like to send a huge thanks to all our judges who presided over this year's contest. Thanks to donations from all our applicants, we donated $1,500 to St. Jude Children's Hospital on behalf of the global pond and water garden industry.

Nine years of fabulous projects are now in the books! Clearly, the Water Artisans of the Year contest has become a staple celebration of the water feature industry's best projects year over year. POND Trade magazine will start accepting entries for this year's contest later this fall. Do you have what it takes to join the elite crew that proudly calls themselves the Water Artisans of the Year?









Runner-up

Pondless



Sean Frost
Nature Scapes
www.naturescapespro.com

Look closely and you'll spot a hobbit's cozy home tucked away amid a lush array of perennial plantings! The pondless waterfall begins above the home and falls toward the client's home. Large-scale rock work and native plantings round out the edges of this gem, creating a one-of-a-kind masterpiece that was custom and purpose built for the feature builder's mother.





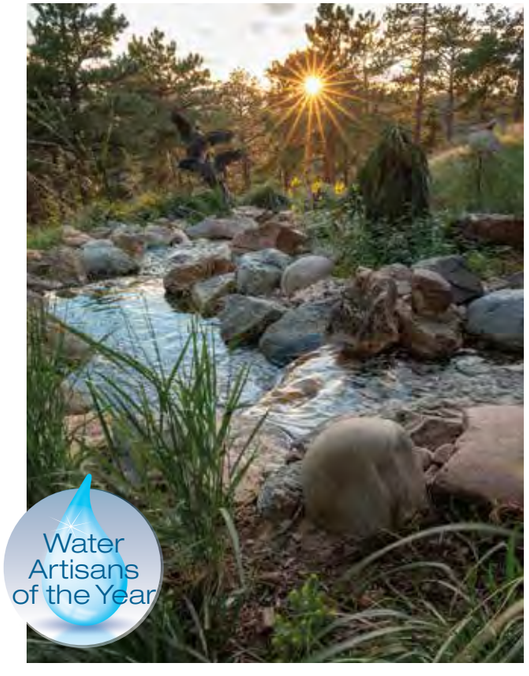
Runner-up

Most Naturalistic



Shane Hemphill & Heath Webb
Art of the Yard
www.customwaterfeaturesdenver.com

This stunning 116-foot pondless waterfall cascades gracefully through a pristine natural setting, dropping an impressive 30 feet along its course. Surrounded by greenery and rugged landscapes, it creates a soothing symphony of rushing water that blends seamlessly into its environment. The absence of a pond enhances its natural appeal and minimizes maintenance. Perfect for relaxation or inspiration, this waterfall offers an unforgettable connection to nature's serene beauty.



Runner-up

Fountains & Formal Features



Peter Brymer
Aquatic Lifestyles Limited
www.aquaticlifestyles.co.nz

A roofed patio with fireplace, outdoor kitchen and seating areas create an inviting ambience for this fish and turtle pond, which was designed to contain the turtles without obvious turtle fences. Filtration is provided by an intake bay and constructed wetland. One pump supplies water to the wetland, another adds extra flow to the waterfall, and the third supplies the three spillway bowls and bottom and surface jets.









Runner-up

Recreational Ponds



Bobby Kenyon
C.E. Pontz Sons
www.cepontzsons.com

This charming recreation swim pond includes a wetland filter that flows over into a 50-foot stream full of tons of cascading waterfalls throughout. The swim pond itself is approximately 65 by 45 feet and features an intake bay and jets throughout to help skim the service debris. Native landscaping was installed around the exterior of the natural stone patio, which features an inviting fire pit for evening gatherings.



A watercourse is restored and re-lined in the Andean Condor enclosure (above) in the historic aviary. A postcard (below) shows the rock garden in the 1930s.

Discovery Digs

Waterscape renovations at Franklin Park Zoo



by Demi Fortuna and Edwin Scott-Fortuna,
August Moon Designs

We were originally called in to help renew the water feature in an historic rock garden at the Franklin Park Zoo. Franklin Park was originally designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, creator of New York's Central Park, as the jewel of the Emerald Necklace of parks encircling Boston. Olmstead died before its completion, but in 1910, Arthur Shurcliff, a former employee of the Olmsted office, was appointed to prepare a plan for the Franklin Park Zoo, which opened its first exhibit in 1912.

Years later, around 1930, he built the rock garden with a stream that coursed down a hill from the base of an iconic folly, a stone replica of an ancient tower overlooking the plantings. Not long afterward, Shurcliff was asked by John D. Rockefeller Jr. to design and oversee the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. To be asked to bring some of his work back to life was an honor indeed.

The garden had fallen into neglect over the last century. No one could tell us exactly when or how the stream last flowed, but the lower part of the garden had been removed to make way for the adjacent African Tropical Forest exhibit that opened in 1989. When we first saw it on a cold winter's day in 2022, there was little way to tell that a magnificent garden had ever existed. Overgrown with weeds and trees, only the original bridge and two stairs were still visible. What remained of the watercourse was a shallow dimple across the slope. We had our work cut out for us!

Breaking Ground

The first order of business was to uncover what was left of the garden. Aided by an amazing collection of photographs possibly taken by Shurcliff himself, and with the tireless help of the zoo's horticultural department, we uncovered what was left of the original rock work. The upper two-thirds of the original stones had escaped the bulldozers of the '80s and were exactly as pictured in the photos, leaving the lower third a barren, weedy slope. That turned out to be our greatest advantage.

We needed machine access to the site, because we didn't want to disturb any original rock work. We would need to create an ADA-compliant walkway up the steep slope. The lower third of the hill had just enough room to squeeze in a diagonal path to the center of the garden, the point where we could intersect the original paths hidden under the weeds. We got to work building a ramp that would comply with wheelchair guidelines — 8 feet wide with landings every 30 feet. Once that was in, we could begin recreating the lost watercourse.

The work was divided into two parts. First, we would need to find and clear what was left of the stream and figure out how to make it run again. Then we would extend the original watercourse with new features all the way down to the bottom to draw people exiting the tropical forest into the rock garden.

Extra Foam

Our first surprise was the depth of the stream, which had appeared to be a shallow depression lined with stones crossing the slope. We ended up pulling out between 2 and 4 feet of soil and debris to get down the bottom of the original concrete trough, which was still intact after more than a century. The trough was built in angled sections with flat bottoms and walls that varied in height up to 6 feet above the floor, where the stream passed under the bridge. The inner concrete walls were covered from view with dry-stacked stone, always ready to collapse inward as we pulled saplings and debris out from between them.

We needed a way to stabilize the inner walls without changing them in any way. After all, this was the work of giants — literally, the first U.S. "landscape architects," a term coined by Olmstead. We found the ideal solution in waterfall foam, of all things, to lock the most precarious stones in place without damaging or defacing them. Once the foam dried, we could remove all the visible signs of its presence while ensuring stability.

At the end of the original stream, we decided to create a hidden reservoir and pumping station that would circulate water from what would look like a shallow stream back up to headwater pool at the base of the tower. We built a block enclosure on a concrete floor, lined it with geotextile and EPDM liner, and then covered



The apparently shallow stream (top) is filled with 100 years of debris. The stream (middle) has debris removed and the interior stone drywalls stabilized. The new stream (bottom) replaces the sections removed decades ago during renovations.

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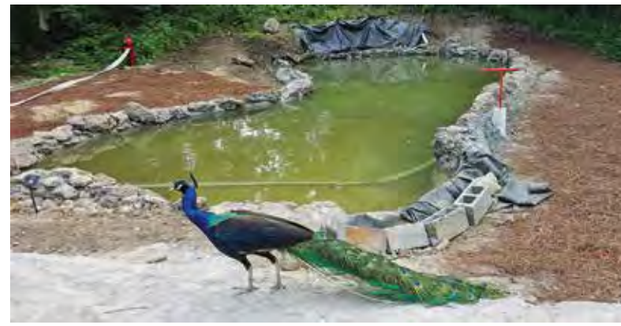
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The faux "bridge" (left) has recovered original bluestone treads separating the upper stream from the new lily pond (right), which proved fascinating to more than just the human denizens of the zoo.

the liner with another layer of geotextile and a 2-inch-thick layer of fiber-reinforced concrete.

The liner, fully encapsulated in this way, can easily resist the ravages of weather, storms and time (not to mention lions and tigers and bears). It is our go-to method for zoos, botanical gardens and public parks where protection against damage from whatever cause, even purposeful, is critical.

Every feature we installed at the zoo — and there were many — has fully encapsulated liner. We installed a 4-inch, cast-iron drain valve in the reservoir and filled it with EcoBlox water matrix blocks and dual PV15000 Pump Vaults, leaving room to cover everything with 3 to 4 inches of gravel. A piece of liner on top of the blocks ensured that water would run on top of the reservoir to the very end of the stream, where it appeared to dip under a second bridge.

Building "Bridges"

The "bridge" was nothing of the sort. We set stones along either side of the walkway at its narrowest point, where the ramp from the bottom of the garden met the original encircling paths. We used huge pieces of salvaged bluestone from a stairway that had once decorated a deconstructed area of the garden, saved for future use by an intern 20 years before he became the zoo's president. Talk about foresight!

On the other side of the bridge, outside of the original garden, we decided to build a pond in the only spot on the slope that could accommodate one. Its interesting shape was a result of needing to shoehorn it in between a 4-inch water line to an adjacent fire hydrant, and an 8-inch gas line to power plant for the tropical forest.

Thank goodness my son Edwin is an artist on machinery. We installed the concrete walls to make it seem like water entered the pond from underneath the other side of the "bridge," as if coming from the stream. We sloped the concrete floor to a 4-inch bottom drain with cast-iron valve for easy cleaning. Once we were ready to line the pond, we built a waterfall on the face of the slope above the pond, both to retain the hill and to actually return the water from a reservoir at the very bottom of the garden. Because access to the slope above the pond was limited, with no way to get large rock there safely, we used waterfall foam to create the general shape of the falls, then covered that with fiber-reinforced concrete to keep roots from growing through. A single piece of liner covered top and bottom with geotextile covered everything, and we sculpted the waterfall out of the concrete layer that covered the liner sandwich.

Opposite the waterfall, we built a stream of concrete in the same manner, terminating at the very bottom of the garden at a second EcoBlox reservoir, again fitted with PV15000 Pump Vaults and a 4-inch valved drain for easy maintenance. Because the reservoir was right across from the doors of the tropical forest, and we wanted to draw people into the garden, we installed an Oase Aquarius EcoExpert 11500-gph fountain pump in one of the vaults, powering three Schaumsprudler nozzles ("frothy" in German sounds so much better!). The Aquarius pump makes the water continually dance, much to the delight of schoolchildren and adults alike.

The rock garden took more than two years to complete because we ended up working on four other exhibits at the zoo, each of which took priority.

Condor Creek

The first was the lining of the stream in the aviary, which we came to call Condor Creek after its rather intimidating inhabitants. We were supposed to quickly complete the straightforward, almost boring task of covering the 300-foot-long stream with our liner sandwich and then capping that with fiber-reinforced concrete. There would be no boulder work, because it was Shurcliff's signature exhibit — one of the first and still one of the largest flight cages in the country, and perhaps the world.

We had to exactly match the appearance of the original plain concrete trough. That simple task was turned upside down by a postcard. One of the keepers who has been at the zoo for decades found a postcard of the exhibit as it once looked, and it was a revelation. After a number of designs that were rejected by the parks department, Shurcliff came up with the Grotto — three huge stone arches inset to form a cave that looked as if it receded deep into the earth, with stalactites growing from the ceiling and water flowing from



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its mouth. Easily 40 feet tall and 50 feet wide, the only evidence of its existence were the few huge stones that made up the very top of the outer arch. No one at the zoo knows when it was done or why, but at some time in the past, thousands of cubic yards of fill and truckloads of concrete were brought in at great expense to almost completely bury the Grotto.

I couldn't stand it. We had already bid the job and probably should have just let it stay buried, but I needed to see it returned to the light of day. With one crew making good progress relining the stream, I talked myself into splitting off a second crew to re-expose the monumental construct. The first hurdle was simple but arduous: break out the 4-inch-thick basin and "bowling ball" waterfall that had been built at the top of the mound concealing the rock work.

The process was complicated by the aviary itself; we had to pass all the excavated material by 5-gallon pail to a dumpster set outside through the aviary doorway. The next hurdle was massive and should have been impossible. Just under the 4-inch basin was a poured concrete cap 15 feet across and 2 feet thick. I was obsessed, but I would have given up had fate not played a hand. On an off chance, I called the closest rental business to the zoo located literally blocks away. They specialized in electric machinery, and they had a tool I never knew existed. It was purpose built for what ailed us: a tracked robot bank vault dismantler designed to break up 24-inch reinforced concrete.

Who'd have thunk it? Not I! But there it was, climbing the 40-foot slope to the top of the mound, busting through the massive pour, making big rocks into little rocks. It took three days, but it was done, and there was a bonus. The concrete had been poured on about 20 yards of clean, screened sand, for some unknown reason. I now had enough sand for all the concrete I would need to remake the stream once I was done excavating. We were able to expose the tops of all three arches and figure out the mystery of the stalactites visible in the postcard. We found a semicircular copper spray bar with tiny holes that must have sprayed limestone-rich water over concrete nubs that had been built into the ceiling of the Grotto. Over time, the lime that had accreted on them gave them the look of natural stalactites. Brilliant! Now, the condors love to bathe in the generous stream that once again issues from the Grotto. I hope one day someone uncovers the rest of this amazing monument.

Standout Features

The rest of the stream works really well, also. We fixed the pump intake of the system, a skimmer grate completely surrounded by 30-inch-deep water. It used to required waders to clean it. Now it's part of a surface level graveled upflow filter built with EcoBlox that makes access easy. A valve adjusts the flow between the stream and the upflow filter. Water flowing through the EcoBlox from a single point slows down and drops all its suspended solids. The 6-inch bed of gravel on top of the blocks supports plants that pull out the plentiful nutrients produced by the three massive raptors in the aviary — a pair of condors that might mate if all goes well, and a Stellar's Sea Eagle named O-washi who is friendlier than his 6-inch talons might suggest.

The last exhibit to mention combines a new 4-inch bottom drain, a wet sump and a shelter meant to evoke a response from the younger visitors to the zoo. The habitat for the hyena was difficult to clean, with an 1-1/2" pool style intake, a sand filter and a swimming pool pump. Bamboo all around the exhibit guaranteed an abundance of long,







The EcoBlox regeneration zones (top and middle) are covered with thin layers of gravel that sequester sediments and support plantings to remove nitrates. Can you guess the theme of the Hyena Cave (bottom)? Hint: Mufasa lives next door.

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flat leaves that blocked the flow into the filter. The pool filter had difficulty with the debris that built up rapidly. Cleaning took two people a full day with an auxiliary pump to drain the pond and a lot of manual labor to clear the leaves in the convoluted stream that had many deep pockets that trapped and held leaves tenaciously.

We started with the drainage system, connecting a 4-inch bottom drain to a side inlet to a trough skimmer that hadn't been functioning well. The 4-inch PVC line from the bottom drain pitched steeply down to a 4-inch cast iron valve, then out into a bamboo grove at grade. A 4-inch wye just before the valve extended a leg of 4-inch pipe pitched upward to a wet sump outside the pond made of an Atlantic PVRI Remote Pump Vault — basically a sealed box at the same level as the pond. A TT9000 submerged in the sump draws water down into the drainpipe from both the bottom and the skimmer trough.

Heavy wastes settle out near the wye instead of flowing uphill towards the sump, to be flushed at will by simply opening the valve. The pump delivered a generous flow — about 7500 gph — to the top of the stream, increasing circulation and oxygenation of the feature. To further simplify the cleaning procedure, we filled in the pockets of the stream, widened it to a constant broom width and built up the edges to contain the greater flow. In keeping with a theme, we built a termite mound over the pump vault to keep the hyena out and built a red sandstone cave for shelter. Can you guess the theme? The kids sure can, especially since the exhibit is right next to the lions.



A 4-inch pipe connects a bottom drain to a 'wet' remote pump vault. A valve at the wye allow keepers to easily drain off settled wastes that the pump draws into the pipe.

Today, the cleaning procedure takes one person an hour or so. First, they sweep the stream down with the pump running to push all the debris into the pond. Then, they turn the pump off and rake out the leaves in the skimmer trough, rinsing whatever they can't lift out easily into the pond. Then, they open the bottom drain to clear both the plumbing lines, raking whatever debris is in the pond into the powerful suction of the drain. All that's left is to close the drain, refill and turn the pump back on.

We installed similar improvements in the Australian Bird Exhibit and the Painted Dog Pool, but you probably get the picture. We hope we'll be helping out for many years to come.

About the Author



Demi Fortuna started August Moon Designs in 1990 in Stony Brook, Long Island, New York, bringing hundreds of creative, low-maintenance water features to life over the years. When not writing, recording product videos or training contractors for Atlantic-Oase, he and his son **Edwin** build innovative ponds and fountains for home owners, businesses, schools, botanical gardens and zoos all over the U.S. and Mexico.



Beyond the RING

Lead management is key to your business's success

by Clayton Graba,
Kaeru CX

In the business world, marketing your business is a top discussion. That's what gets the phone ringing, brings potential clients to your doorstep and generates that much-needed interest in your services. However, the process does not end after that first client outreach — far from it, actually.

With the lack of an effective lead-management system in place, you risk losing those hard-won leads and wasting marketing dollars. Let's jump into the often-overlooked art of lead management and how it will transform your business, ensuring that every marketing effort pays off to its fullest potential.

Successful Sales Funnel

Think of lead management as the bridge between your marketing efforts and actual sales. While marketing brings in leads, lead management is what turns them into paying and loyal clients. Businesses often dedicate significant effort and resources to generating phone calls, but without a consistent follow-up and communication process, many leads can be lost along the way.

Without implementing lead management, potential clients will slip through the cracks, end up with a competitor or lose interest due to a lag in response. Lead management ensures that every potential client who reaches out is consistently guided through the sales journey efficiently, building trust and demonstrating reliability. Just as a properly constructed water feature requires all the correct equipment to function properly, a thriving pond business should strive for balance between marketing and lead management.

Waste of Marketing Dollars

Let's say you invested heavily in an advertising campaign — maybe a social-media blitz, Google ads, a new website with search engine optimization (SEO) or even some targeted postcard mailings. The calls start pouring in, which is the best sign that your marketing efforts are working effectively.

What happens next? With no





structured lead management process, those calls may go unanswered — or worse, forgotten altogether. Every missed lead represents a missed revenue opportunity. This will drastically reduce the return on investment for your marketing effort.

Marketing alone does not drive sales. Marketing draws in interest and builds awareness to push that lead to contact you. Without structured communication, potential clients may feel undervalued or even assume that their business doesn't matter to you. Studies show that leads followed up within the first hour of initial contact are seven times more likely to convert than those followed up later. An even faster response time exponentially increases the likelihood of conversion. An immediate response is an easy but powerful step in avoiding wasted marketing dollars.

Beyond the initial communication, lead management allows you to nurture relationships by creating processes to communicate at the right times during a potential client's journey, especially for clients who need to think things over (that grueling reply we all get from time to time.)

Let's pretend that we know a lead will call to inquire with interest in a koi pond because your marketing rocks. Record their interest, send follow-up information and set automated reminders to continuously communicate with them in order to ensure they stay engaged until they're ready to say yes. If this easy yet time consuming step isn't taken, this lead could easily slip through the cracks, leading to both a lost client and wasted marketing resources.

Insights, Efficiency & Growth

With lead management comes lead tracking, which provides you with a steady stream of insights that helps you make data-driven decisions to refine both your marketing and sales strategies. Here's how effective lead tracking can help you with sales strategy, marketing decisions and sales goals.

Lead tracking provides sales performance insights that include critical data on the strengths and weaknesses of your sales strategy. It allows you to easily analyze patterns, identify common customer inquiries and pinpoint where leads tend to drop off in the sales process. For instance, if many leads stop responding after you send an initial quote, this might suggest it's time to adjust your approach by providing clearer information or integrating additional follow-up touches.

Tracking your total number of leads over time and observing conversion rates of those leads can help you forecast your sales performance, anticipate busy seasons, predict staffing needs and allow you to adjust marketing efforts. These data not only guide your team's priorities but also help optimize their approach for maximum conversion.

After all, lead tracking isn't just for sales — it's an invaluable tool to help you create your marketing strategy. By tracking where your leads are finding your company, you can focus your marketing budget on the most productive channels. For instance, if you find that most conversion inquiries are coming from social media ads rather than print, you can channel more resources into online advertising, ultimately boosting your return on investment. On the flip side, if a marketing channel isn't producing leads, tracking can quickly highlight this, allowing you to reallocate your marketing efforts. Tracking is far more cost-effective than simply running ads everywhere without assessing their effectiveness.



Notably, lead tracking allows you to gain insights into your revenue pipeline by observing how many leads are required to meet specific sales goals. For example, if you know that 10 new leads convert to three sales and an average of $15,000 dollars per sale, you can calculate exactly how many leads you need to meet your revenue target each quarter. This insight transforms your sales process from reactive to proactive, allowing you to allocate resources and scale effectively.

Finally, one of the most overlooked benefits of lead management is the positive impact it has on the customer experience. With consistent, organized follow-up communication, leads feel valued and are more likely to trust you with their project. In the pond industry, where projects can be a significant investment, clients value the professionalism and attention that a lead-management system provides. It reassures them that they're in capable, organized hands from the first phone call to the completed project and beyond.



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How to Implement

For pond professionals just starting out with lead management, a customer relationship management (CRM) tool can be a game-changer. A CRM tool helps you track leads, automate communications, keep notes organized and track those leads all in one place.

Not ready for a CRM? There are still effective steps you can take to get started.

Try organizing leads in a spreadsheet. Record each lead's contact information, inquiry type and status (e.g., new, quoted, follow-up needed or closed). This setup might sound basic, but even a simple spreadsheet can help prevent leads from falling through the cracks.

Whether you use calendar alerts, phone reminders or a physical planner, set reminders to follow up with leads regularly. Clients who reached out last week may have gotten busy or distracted, and a simple message can remind them of their interest in your services.

Periodically review your lead data to identify which types of leads or inquiries are converting into sales. Over time, these insights can guide your service offerings and marketing focus, ensuring that you're putting your energy into what works best.

Many CRM tools allow for automated emails, texts and phone calls to communicate with leads, all while you concentrate on selling. Automations can send a thank-you message after an initial inquiry or send reminders if a lead has gone cold. This gentle persistence keeps your business top of mind without manual effort, letting you focus on closing sales and serving existing clients.

Marketing grabs attention and makes your phone ring. Lead management turns those calls into loyal paying clients. A structured lead-management system will transform how your business handles inquiries, improving client relationships, maximizing every marketing dollar and setting yourself up for sustained, consistent growth. By pairing marketing with lead management, you build a well-rounded machine that not only increases revenue and profit, but also enhances customer experience.

So, don't let valuable leads slip through the cracks. Make lead management a priority and watch your business thrive.



About the Author

Clayton Graba, otherwise known as "Clay," currently resides in New Jersey with his extremely supportive wife and amazing two sons. He owns A Frog's Dream Aquatic Services, which has been operating since 2006. Having dived into the automation and software world, he really wants to help other contractors realize the potential of embracing technology to stimulate company growth.

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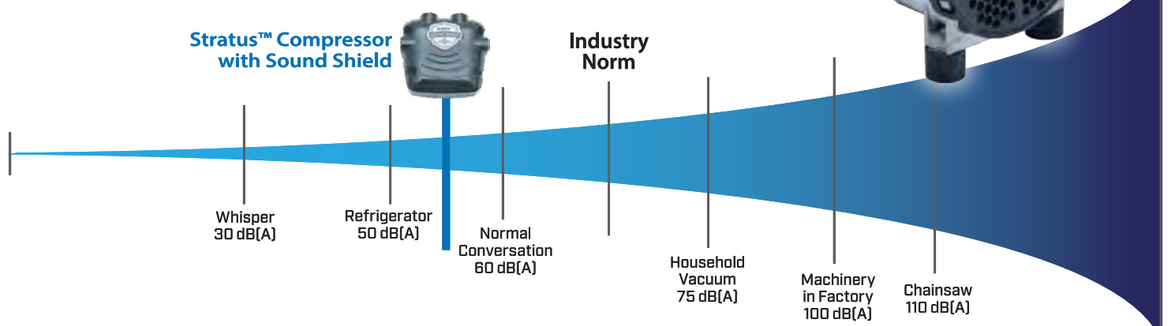
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No Vacancy

The temptation to overcrowd your pond

by Carolyn Weise,
Ecological Laboratories, Inc.

Why might someone end up with a crowded pond in the first place?

For starters, we send newcomers who show the faintest interest in our ponds to a koi show in the area. They attend, just to see what it is that makes koi or fancy goldfish so special to us, and before they get out of there, they have spent their week's pay on fish, fish food, plants and liner. Best of all, their head is spinning with knowledge from each of the vendors at the show!



Great! We'll have our next club meeting at their house and help them build it. Once hooked, we make it a point to meet regularly, talk about koi, listen to the experts, learn everything we can about koi care. We learn the language and compare our current fish to those at the shows. Ours don't really compare, so we keep adding better and better fish.

This is the common formula. Basically, we keep adding to the pond. Soon, we will need a bigger pond with all the bells and whistles, greater depth and high-class filtration. Oh boy!

Koi as Pets

My fish never fail to rush to the side of the pond when I open the door. They are all gathered at the side of the pond when I come to the pond, sort of climbing on top of each other. They are so happy to see me. They actually know me from a stranger. When my friends come over, they don't even bother to come to the surface. It's a special feeling to be greeted by your fish, knowing that they don't do this for everyone.

And, we can train them! They eat out of our hands, and we can pet them. I could never do this with my aquarium fish — they just wouldn't have it. In contrast, koi are social animals, so having just one would be to condemn it to a slow death. It has to have company, and there are so many to choose from.

I was first drawn to the shiny fish (Gin Rin), butterfly koi and the fantastic Kikokuryu varieties. I wasn't having just any koi carp with barbels. When I saw the dark-colored Goshiki with bright-red colors, I knew I wanted one of those! In one of the lectures, I heard that the colors were secondary to the body shape. Well, now I had to have one of everything! Kohaku, Sanke, Chagoi, Bekko, Shushui, Showa, Tancho, Matsuba, Hariwake, Ogon, three kinds of Utsuri, Budo Goromo — just to name a few!

Growing a Pond

Of course, the pond had to be deeper to accommodate development of the female koi body. When they reach the magical age of three, they are sexually mature, no matter what size they are. For koi, when the water reaches 70 – 72 degrees Fahrenheit, they churn the water, create



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a smelly froth and stop eating for up to a week while the males push the females against the sides of the pond. For goldfish, it is not quite as dramatic, except they do it every other week for the entire summer season. That can be a huge number of babies!

So how do you tell who's who? To keep it simple, I figured that the chasers were the males. I figured that I needed a second pond — one for males and one for the battered females. Actually, make that three ponds — one for the babies, too.



Did you know that koi and goldfish can interbreed? The results are not attractive, but for many people, if it was born in their pond, it's beautiful and it isn't going anywhere.

The Size Factor

When shopping, we tend to underestimate a fish's size at maturity. When buying a cute little 3-to-5-inch koi, who really pictures the huge 30-to-36-inch monster fish it will become? Some goldfish can grow almost as large if given time and room.

Who actually factors in the size? Most people don't even care, and truthfully, it is actually the DNA in the fish that will determine the size of each koi. Some will grow quickly and reach great sizes, while others get the benefits of high-protein foods but never grow over 12 to 15 inches.

As an example, we have a 1,000-gallon pond and added a dozen baby koi. They quickly disappeared into the mass of water, which was so disappointing. So, we went back and bought another dozen or so larger fish. Since the dozen baby koi disappeared in the pond, we could easily add a dozen 6-to-12-inch koi this time, right? However, after adding them, the pond still seems empty. The cycle repeats and repeats.

And once a koi has made its home in your pond, it's nearly impossible to part with it. Oh, but that's my favorite fish! I've had it for years! That's my daughter's favorite! I can't get rid of that one! This one was born in the pond, I can't get rid of it now... My wife would kill me if I gave her favorite koi away! The babies are so cute! Maybe I have a Grand Champion in here … in short, we tend to treat them like our own children.

Busting the Budget

The more fish you have, the more fish food you'll need to buy. Do you remember when you had a small pond with just a few fish, you bought a small container of fish food and fed only a few pellets daily? Life was simpler back then.

Then you went to a koi show and learned that your pond was too small. You bought a large bag or two of baby koi because they were inexpensive. Another dealer at the show had a special on food! You already had plans in your head for a larger, new pond to hold all your fancy koi that would one day take Grand Champion ... Then you met the best builders in the business, and they gave you a special price on your dream pond. You couldn't wait to get home and put things into action!

We have all been there and done that. We do not look back or regret it. Now, we have our high-end koi food delivered to our homes 40 to 100 lbs. at a time. There are those, however, who cannot afford high-end foods and will shop at big box stores. (Oh, no! Their poor koi.) Truth be known, a million gallons would soon be overcrowded by koi if the owner did not learn to limit

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buying, to cull, or to find some other way to curb their habits. There is always a more beautiful fish to buy, and there are more fantastic hybrid colors when it comes to new koi. Maybe there will someday be Koi Anonymous group.

Impact on Water Quality

Your wallet isn't the only thing that will take a hit from an overcrowded pond. Indeed, some of us adopt a "the-sky's-the-limit" budget for our fish, only to cut expenses when it comes to the filters. You will likely sacrifice water quality, resulting in the need for more frequent water changes and larger filters. As the saying goes, "Take care of the water, and it will take care of the fish." Before you start tossing medications into the pond, find out what is wrong with the water.

The issue of poor water quality actually comes from overstocking, overfeeding, and failure to do regular partial water changes and other regular cleaning. A filter needs to be cleaned or backwashed. A pond lined with rocks or stones helps by providing more area for beneficial or heterotrophic bacteria to colonize, but it also traps and holds larger organic waste.



Snails are not the answer. Anything that eats also poops, so they are not effective pond cleaners. Bogs can be helpful if you plant the best plants. If you are feeding too much, high phosphates will show up on water tests. So, you will do best if the bog contains red-leaved plants to remove phosphates, and so on. The bog should not contain more organics or soil. All in all, you will have better water quality with less fish and good pond maintenance.

KH, or carbonate alkalinity, is an integral part of keeping a healthy and stable pond. It stabilizes the pH and is vitally important to the nitrifying bacteria (Nitrosomonas and Nitrobacter). When the KH level is low, you will see nitrites building. If you don't notice nitrites, you will notice toxic ammonia as the nitrogen cycle slows and then stops. The more fish present (giving off ammonia) and the more you feed (increasing the ammonia), the faster KH is being used up in the pond.

Fish Stressors

Fish don't die from parasites. They die from stress. Stress leaves them weakened and open to health problems, parasites and other ailments. Overcrowding is stressful. Poor water quality is stressful. Think of dense air pollution in a city.

You may notice torn fins, lost scales or scales hanging loose on the fish. You may have frequent flashing or fish hanging beneath the waterfall. Other fish may stop eating and stay by themselves. These are common signs of lesser fish health.

Did you know that female koi need to swim vertically to develop their muscles? Thus, the depth of the pond is important. For male koi, the length and width of the pond are more important. Think about how stressful it must be swimming into each other!

If your fish are bumping into each other, especially at feeding time, there is no doubt they are sharing parasites from one body to the next. There is no such thing as an antibiotic pond or fish. All fish and ponds contain a number of parasites. However, healthy fish will not be troubled by them until they become stressed.

Natural fish stressors include loud noises, e.g., if there is construction going on nearby. Storms and seasonal weather changes can also be particularly stressful.

Ill-Advised Solutions

Why wouldn't you just build a bigger pond? Unfortunately, the time spent in a holding pond waiting for their new pond, and then the transfer into a new, uncycled pond can be very stressful for your fish. It is not the answer to overcrowding problems. You have males and females there. What do you suppose they will do in the bigger pond when the water temperature in the spring hits 70 degrees Fahrenheit? That's right, you'll end up with even more fish!

Backyard breeding (in hopes of striking it rich) can be tempting, but again, the problem is the expense of keeping and feeding compared with simple selling. The Japanese koi breeders cull from their babies, starting very early and many times before their tried-and-true bloodlines are ready to show or sell. It is not as glorious as it sounds.

And frankly, if you were able to cull in the first place, I doubt you would have gotten to this point at all.

About the Author

Carolyn Weise is Ecological Laboratories' pond expert and customer support service going on 20 years as of August 2025. Her home is in Florida, where her koi pond is 4,500 gallons. It will never be overstocked, because she chose to buy koi old enough to be sexed and keep only one sex and limited the number of fish to no more than six. That eliminates spawning, crowding and any problems that go with it. Happy koi pond, happy owner!





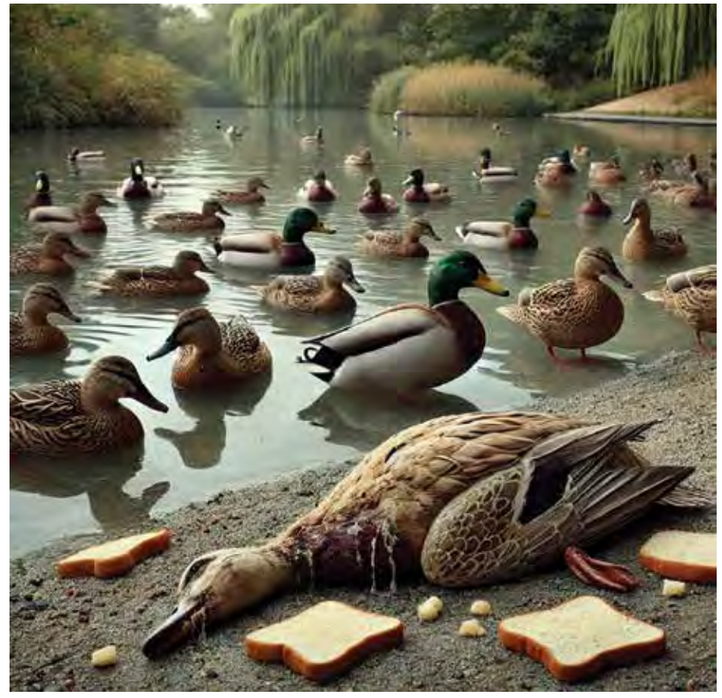


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Duck Disruption

Duck, Duck, **GONE!**

Feeding feathered friends pondside can be fatal

by Patrick Simmsgieger,
Diversified Waterscapes Inc.

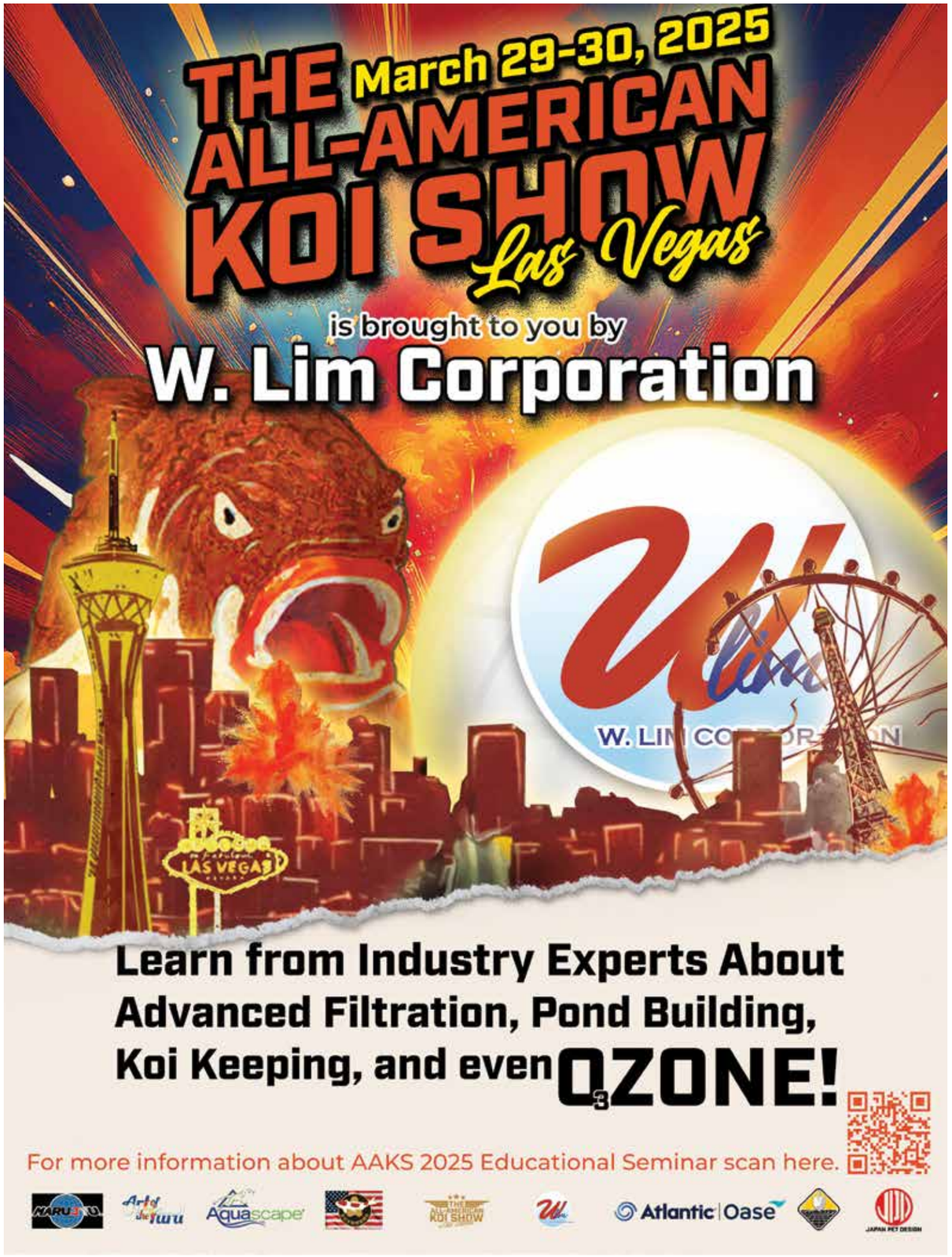
Imagine strolling by a serene pond in your backyard or a beautifully maintained lake, bread in hand, ready to feed the ducks. It seems harmless, even enjoyable — but did you know that this simple act can have devastating consequences for both the ducks and the pond itself?

Not long after finishing my pool, I discovered that when we feed ducks, especially in artificial settings like ponds, we inadvertently disrupt their natural diet and behavior. Worse, leftover food and increased waste can degrade water quality, leading to algae blooms, foul odors and potential harm to other aquatic life. Feeding ducks might feel kind, but it creates far-reaching problems that can jeopardize the very water features we cherish.

Wild & Domestic Ducks

Wild and domestic ducks both find their way into ponds and lakes, but their presence can pose different challenges.

The colorful mallards and other wild ducks you see on many lakes and ponds have bodies that allow them to fly. They are physically designed to eat natural foods growing in their environment to stay healthy and light for flight. Their diet consists of aquatic plants, insects and small invertebrates that help them maintain a healthy balance. However, when humans introduce bread, chips or other foods, wild ducks neglect their natural food sources. This change not only harms their health and adversely affects natural migration patterns,



but it also disrupts the ecosystem of the pond. Uneaten food decays, polluting the water and depleting oxygen levels critical for fish and aquatic plants.

Unlike their wild counterparts, domestic ducks such as the popular Pekin (white duck with orange beak and feet — think AFLAC) struggle in unmanaged ponds. They can't fly away to find food or safety, and their dependence on humans often leads to overpopulation. In confined ponds, these ducks produce excess waste, which increases nutrient levels in the water. High nutrient levels encourage algae growth, turning the pond green and slimy. Over time, this process, called eutrophication, chokes aquatic life and damages the pond's ecological balance.

Water Quality Impacts

When people scatter bread and other scraps around a pond, not all of it gets eaten. The leftovers sink into the water and decompose, rotting and releasing nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. These nutrients act as fertilizers for algae, leading to unsightly blooms that can suffocate fish and block sunlight from reaching underwater plants.

Rotting food also encourages bacterial growth and disease. Common pathogens like Salmonella and E. coli thrive in ponds polluted by decaying food and duck waste. This creates health hazards for humans, especially children, who might play near the water, and for pets that may drink from the pond.

An overfed duck population produces a significant amount of waste. Duck feces contain harmful bacteria and can cause spikes in ammonia and other toxic compounds in the water. These substances not only harm fish and invertebrates but also produce foul odors that can ruin the pond's aesthetic appeal.

Ponds with excessive algae blooms and foul odors lose their appeal for recreational use. Whether it's a backyard pond or a community-managed lake, water quality issues discourage visitors and lower property values.

Duck-Feeding Diseases

Duck Virus Enteritis (DVE) is a fatal disease that spreads rapidly in duck populations, especially in overcrowded and artificially fed environments. When DVE outbreaks occur in ponds, entire waterfowl communities often need to be euthanized to prevent further spread.



Algae blooms caused by nutrient pollution can lead to avian botulism. This toxin paralyzes and kills waterfowl, leaving their bodies to decompose in the pond, worsening water quality and attracting scavengers like rats and insects.

Artificially fed ducks often carry parasites that cause swimmer's itch, a rash-like condition affecting humans who come into contact with infested water. This issue is especially problematic in public ponds and lakes managed by professionals.

Remember that a healthy pond supports diverse aquatic life, including fish, frogs and beneficial microorganisms. Excess nutrients and waste from duck feeding upset this balance, leading to fish kills and a loss of biodiversity.

Food Follies

Feeding ducks attracts rats, pests and predators that can endanger humans. Rotting food pollutes the water and breeds deadly diseases and parasites. Ducks defecate at the site of scattered food or bread, and bacteria in feces create much higher risks for illness or disease. In fact, most waterfowl die-offs in the past 10 years have been attributed to artificial feeding.

Ducks that are overfed create dangerous amounts of waste that harm fish and other animals living in ponds. Some foods like corn may be OK as a snack for ducks, but fish can't digest it and die. Seeds cause severe cramping pain in ducks. And after all, food waste bobbing on the water's edge is ugly!

Proactive Pond Management

For pond builders and managers, maintaining water quality is paramount. To minimize the effects of duck feeding, they can do a number of things, including installing signage to educate the public about the dangers of feeding ducks. If possible, design new ponds with barriers to discourage ducks from congregating in one area. Use aerators to prevent stagnant water, which can exacerbate pollution.

In some cases, providing controlled feeding stations with nutritionally balanced duck pellets can reduce the spread of disease and limit human interference. Funds from these programs can support pond maintenance and conservation efforts.

Consider that instead of feeding ducks, you could encourage natural foraging by planting native aquatic vegetation around the pond. Share information about the negative impacts of duck feeding with friends, family, and neighbors. Regularly remove debris and use biological treatments to keep the water clear. Work with local wildlife experts to manage overpopulation and relocate domestic ducks to appropriate environments.

About the Author

Patrick Simmsgeiger is the founder and president of Diversified Waterscapes Inc. in Laguna Niguel, California. He is a licensed aquatic pesticide applicator, landscape contractor and Certified Lake Manager (CLM). He is one of the few individuals in the industry who is an expert on all stages of aquatic treatment, from product development and manufacturing to application and treatment.



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The client's view from the kitchen window and back patio looks out over Texas Hill Country.

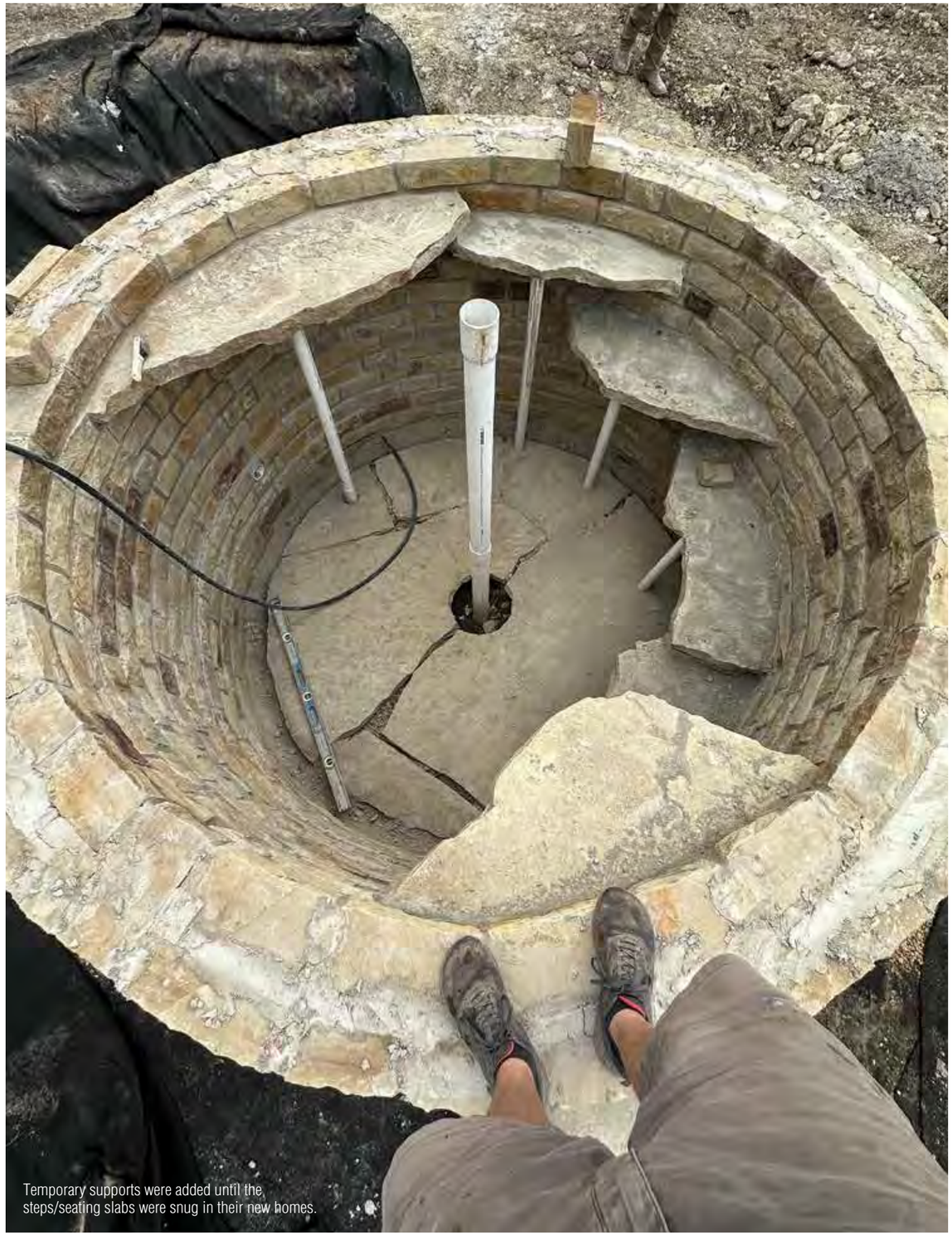
Pushing the **Boundaries**

Designing a natural plunge pool in Texas Hill Country

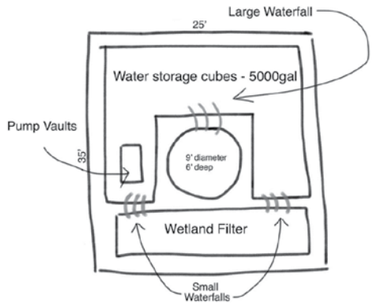
by Eric Arntson,
Stonebridge Pond & Waterfall

I'm always thinking of ways to push the boundaries of design and craftsmanship and stretch my imagination beyond the ordinary. For this build, I combined a couple of thoughts I've been meditating on for several years.

First, I'd thought about the dark, cool depth of water in a typical bubbling urn fountain and wanted to supersize it. Second, digging in the limestone bedrock of Central Texas is always a challenge, and once all the effort has been spent excavating and filling in the entire space with Aqua Blox



Temporary supports were added until the steps/seating slabs were snug in their new homes.



Sketch of the basin design.

and gravel has often felt like a waste of energy.

So, why not capitalize on that deep, cool water with a structure made specifically for people to cool off and escape the dreadful summer heat? I had a vision for the project and was just waiting for the right clients to sell it to.

A Perfect Canvas

As luck would have it, an existing client with a passion for native flora and fauna finally moved out of the city and into the Texas Hill Country. Their new property was the perfect canvas for something unique. The best part was that they gave me complete creative freedom to create a cool water plunge pool within their $100,000 budget. A lofty goal of 6 feet deep, broken excavator teeth and a hydraulic breaker rental made this dig especially time consuming. (And speaking of pushing the boundaries of what's possible, our profit margin was slim on this one, too!)

Simplistically speaking, the project is basically a 5,000-gallon basin with a stone cistern in the middle and an 8-by-24-foot upflow wetland filter positioned on the backside. We used a performance pro external pump to power the recirculation and filtration system to keep the water crystal clear and the ecosystem well balanced. A small waterfall is aimed at the picture windows of their kitchen and living areas, inviting all manner of wildlife into their field of view.













We installed the 5,000-gallon basin (top & middle), followed by the bib liner (above, left). We then prepped (above, right) for the flagstone floor before entering the beautification phase (left) and waterfall building! It's funny how much time we spent on this — many, many weeks in the heat of summer, with only a couple of days dedicated to the actual waterfall build. This is in stark contrast to the majority of our projects, where the waterfall is the main showcase.

With the grade sloping away from the house, the excavation ended up about 7 feet down from the patio edge. The excavation footprint was about 25 by 35 feet, which allowed plenty of space for 150 large Aqua Blox stacked three tall. Granite gravel was tamped down to make the level surface, and a thin layer of sand and two layers of 16-ounce rock pad gave me that extra insurance I needed to feel comfortable with this build. The center trench accommodates a 3-inch plumbing return line, feeding the plunge pool and creating the upwelling sensation I wanted to capture. Extra care was taken to ensure that pipe was put in level and plumb, as a vertical pipe was teed into it and used as the center of the compass for drawing the circle for the stone masonry layout.

The Masonry Circle

The masonry circle is the heart of the plunge pool project. The interior diameter of the masonry circle is 9 feet in diameter,



I got some help from the youngest members of the Stonebridge family.

and the exterior diameter is nearly 11 feet with a bib liner placed at the bottom to ensure proper water retention. I decided to go with a double course of 4-by-6-inch sandstone chop blocks for both the inside and outside of the cistern. This decision wasn't just about aesthetics; it provided strength and stability while also giving the structure a beautiful, natural look.

The through-stone ties helped bind the two sides together and created a thick, strong base to anchor the interior flagstone steps. The space between the walls is filled with rock chips and scraps, with every third course being fully grouted for extra strength and water retention. The exterior wall of the cistern is mostly hidden by the recirculation basin and waterfall on the front side, as well as the wetland filter on the back, so the main focus remains on the beauty of the center plunge pool itself.

Care was taken to determine the specific depth of each step for ingress and egress, which is also used for seating and standing. The lowest two steps are measured for the water level to fall right at the clients' shoulder height. I actually had the clients stand in the hole while I held a tape measure, and we all had a good laugh, with his step an entire 12 inches deeper than hers. I used 2-inch PVC as temporary supports for the steps until more masonry courses were placed on top to pinch in the flagstone steps





Taking a moment to stand back and admire the grandeur of this build, albeit with a relatively small footprint, makes it all worthwhile.

into place permanently. I took special care to round off the edges of the steps and grind them smooth to avoid sharp corners that could lead to injury.

Once the main plunge pool and basin were complete, it was time to tackle the filtration. I used a typical Aquascape wetland filter and back filled the hillside with soil from the excavation and yet another load of weathered limestone boulders.

Lessons Learned

Each time I try something new and ambitious, there's always a lingering background worry of whether it's all going to work. It's a feeling that I think all builders, designers and craftsmen know well. This project was no different, but as with all my previous ventures, I had faith that the work would speak for itself.

I worried that the water pressure within the cistern would press too much out of the bib liner and not leave enough for the upwelling and waterfall, but sure enough, everything came together as planned. The upwelling sensation was exactly what I had hoped for, and the interior steps provided the perfect balance between form and function. It's always a relief when a project works out the way I envisioned — and even better when it surpasses expectations.

A particularly challenging but rewarding aspect of this project was creating the illusion that the water was coming from a dark, mysterious abyss. I wanted it reminiscent of a natural spring, welling up from the earth itself rather than being artificially pumped. To achieve this, I built up a false floor about 5 to 6 feet deep, which I then capped with oversized flagstone. This created a visually striking contrast and gave the water that extra sense of depth.

In hindsight, 6 feet of depth was challenging, and perhaps unnecessarily so. A depth of 3 ½ to 4 feet could have provided the same cooling effect with significantly less time and effort required for installation. That would have resulted in a higher profit margin, too! Maybe next time I'll dial it back a bit.

This project also reinforced an important lesson: embracing creative ideas is always worth the risk. Without pushing the envelope, I wouldn't have these stunning photos or the valuable experiences now in my portfolio. Each project, each challenge, is a learning opportunity, and I already have more fun ideas for the next one.

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About the Author



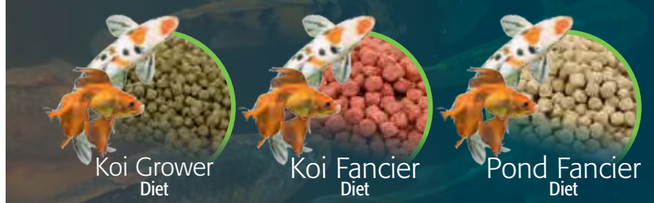
Eric Arntson

a three-time winner of the Water Artisans of the Year contest, founded Stonebridge Landscape in 2003, with the goal of creating breathtaking outdoor spaces that make a lasting impression. His dedication to craftsmanship, simple flowing lines and use of natural material have informed his unique organic style of landscape design. It's truly a gift to live within your passion. "Building water features is very much a creative process for me. I embark on each new build without a specific destination in mind. By placing each stone one by one, I take great care to achieve a balance with the neighboring boulders. My aim is to strike a chord of harmony that emanates peace when the water flows."

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Nymphaea 'Dreaming Bean'


Nymphaea 'Blessings'


Nymphaea 'Tilelli'


Nymphaea 'Princess Elise'

A Closer Look

Winners of the 2024 New Waterlily Competition

by Tim Jennings,
Longwood Gardens

The International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society (IWGS) is proud to announce the results of the 2024 New Waterlily Competition (NWC). The competition was held for the 26th time and has been one of the most anticipated events of the IWGS since 1997, resulting in over 200 entries.

With more than 200 potential new waterlilies just from this competition to choose from, my mind drifted to two questions that at first seemed counterintuitive. Does the world actually need another waterlily?

And to that point, why do we garden? I decided that the answer to the first question has lot to do with the answer to the second question.

Why We Garden

In the fast-paced lives that many of us live, it is easy to forget why we garden. One of my favorite authors and admitted plant collector David L. Culp, creator of Brandywine Cottage, offers this advice for getting the most enjoyment out of your garden: "Look Closer! God is in the details, according to the old sayings, and same may be said of our gardens: full enjoyment comes from looking at everything more closely, from seeking out details that enrich the big picture."

The NWC embraces this philosophy by looking for new colors, forms, leaf patterns and increased frequency of blooms in both tropical and hardy waterlilies entries. Many of these traits are the direct result of looking closer.

And yes, the world always needs another waterlily. So be sure to keep your eye out for these new beauties as you will want to add them your water garden.

2024 Competition

The NWC is open to all hybridizers, and this year's contestants from seven different countries submitted their new waterlily hybrids for evaluation in one of the following four categories: Hardy, Hardy Intersubgeneric (ISG), Tropical Day-Blooming and Miniature Waterlilies.

Like 2023, we divided the competition between two different growing locations, ensuring the best growing conditions for all categories of waterlilies. The hardy and hardy ISG waterlilies were grown by Denver Botanic Gardens' curator of aquatics Tamara Kilbane, who is also the IWGS Nymphaea Registrar. In contrast, the tropical waterlily and miniature categories were grown at Naples Botanical Garden by curator of special collections Matthew Herrman. Plants were evaluated over an eight-week observation period and included digital images and grower's notes used in the judging process.

The entries were evaluated by an international panel of judges on the quality of the flowers and foliage, as well as the general impression and uniqueness of the plant. Among the judges were professional waterlily growers from botanic gardens and plant nurseries, as well as hybridizers and experienced hobbyists.

NWC Winners

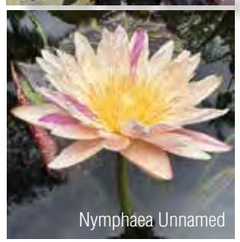
Without further ado, it is my pleasure to introduce to you the winners of the 2024 IWGS New Waterlily Competition.

Best Overall New Waterlily:
Nymphaea 'Dreaming Beans' - by Li Xiao (China)




Nymphaea 'Pradhyota'


Nymphaea 'Boonpa Wasanasong'


Nymphaea Unnamed

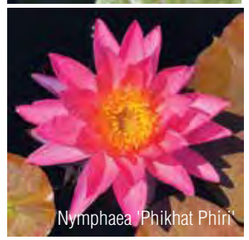
Hardy Waterlilies:
1st Place Nymphaea ‘Blessings’ by Li Xiao (China)
2nd Place Nymphaea ‘Tilelli’ by Florian Henaux (France)
3rd Place Nymphaea ‘Princess Elise’ by Peter Nitzsche (United States)

Tropical Day-Blooming Waterlilies:
1st Place Nymphaea ‘Pradhyota’ by Somnath Pal (India)
2nd Place Nymphaea ‘Boonpa Wasanasong’ by Prajak Tumrarieng (Thailand)
3rd Place Nymphaea Unnamed by Florida Aquatic Nurseries (United States)

Hardy Intersubgeneric Waterlilies:
1st Place Nymphaea ‘Alice Henaux‘ by Florian Henaux (France)


Nymphaea 'Alice Henaux'


Nymphaea 'Siam Orchid'


Nymphaea 'Phikhat Phiri'

2nd Place Nymphaea ‘Siam Orchid’ by Pairat Songpanich (Thailand)
3rd Place Nymphaea ‘Phikhat Phiri‘ by Dachrat Wannapornpanich (Thailand)

Miniature Waterlilies:
1st Place Nymphaea ‘Dreaming Beans’ by Li Xiao (China)
2nd Place Nymphaea ‘Little Mermaid‘ by Wachira Singkong (Thailand) 3rd Place Nymphaea ‘Parichat‘ by Pornchai Sukkasemsamranjit (Thailand)

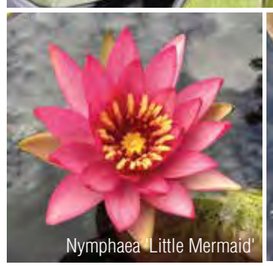
We would like to thank all the hybridizers for offering their creations for evaluation and offer our sincere gratitude to the judges who volunteered their time to take a “Look Closer” at these new hybrids.

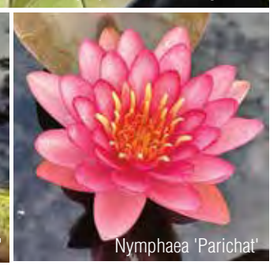
Thank you to our growers, Naples Botanical Garden and Denver Botanical Garden, for hosting this year’s competition and providing the location and staff to ensure the success of the competition. We could not have done this without you.

Our gratitude also goes out to those who made donations to the IWGS in support of this year’s competition.

If you would like to see past winners or are interested in submitting your hybrid into the 2025 competition, please visit www.iwgs.org.


Nymphaea 'Dreaming Bean'

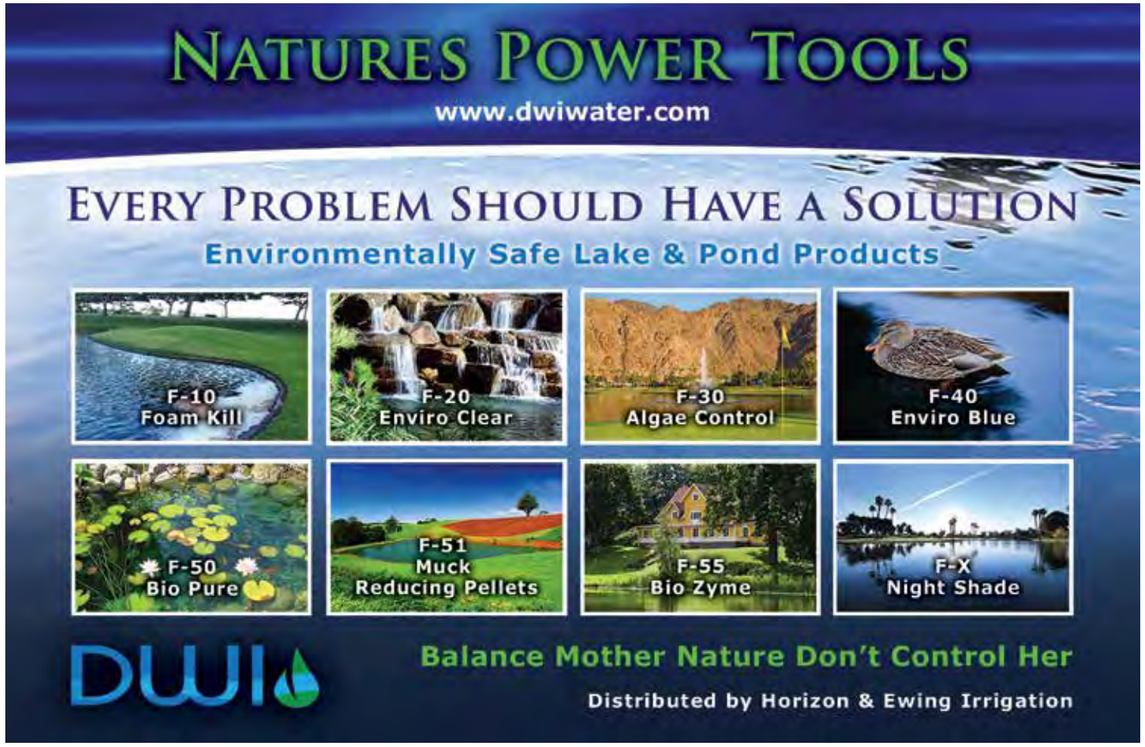

Nymphaea 'Little Mermaid'


Nymphaea 'Parichat'

2024 New Waterlily Competition Judges

- James Bennett (Bennett’s Water Gardens, U.K.)
- Kelly Billing (Water Becomes a Garden, U.S.)
- Sander Dekker (Netherlands)
- Tomas Escribano (Spain)
- Marco Millet (Mexico)
- Rolf Nelson (Nelson Water Gardens, U.S.)
- Rich Sacher (U.S.)
- Jon Sander (Glenstone Museum, U.S.)
- John Sou (Water Garden Paradise, Australia)
- Joe Summers (Chalily, U.S.)
- Cui Wei Yu (China)





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Pond Farewell

Handing Over the Keys

A new chapter begins at POND Trade

by Lora Lee Gelles,
Publisher, POND Trade magazine

With mixed emotions, I have to report that I am hanging up my publisher's hat. This is my last issue of POND Trade magazine.

If someone had asked me two years ago if I would like to sell the magazine, my answer would have been a strong NO. But the more I thought about it, the more it got in my head. I'm 64 and ready to take it down a notch. Plus, I just became a grandma for the second time and would love to spend more time with my grandsons.

I'm going to take you down memory lane a bit and I think you'll agree that it sure has been a fun, wild ride.

Humble Beginnings

I bought the magazine back in 2013. I am an art director and graphic designer by












trade, with a background in magazine publishing at a large publishing house. POND Trade was for sale through the grapevine, and I cannot even remember how I stumbled upon it. I thought to myself, "Hmm, why can't a chatty artist sell ad space and research topics and ask pond builders to write articles? I can do that!"

I found out very quickly that pond folks are wonderful and fun people to talk to, hang with and work with. You welcomed me with open arms. I have met so many great people, and I am proud to call many of you my friends.



I've attended and met people at Pondemonium, Water Garden Expo, IWGS events, Your Pond Farm trade shows, Hardscapes, pond builds, various koi shows and festivals, and more. I've also visited pond builders who've given me personal tours of their work, dropped in on some of my advertisers and flown various places for a good story lead.

What a Ride!

Besides all that, I've had so many great adventures. I've put on waders and experienced a water lily pond firsthand. I've been on various builds and actually got to operate some machinery. I've been to Shaq's house alongside John Magyar, who now maintains the property and showed me what goes on behind the scenes. I went down to Alabama to visit Ten Mile Nursery and met with Laura Bancroft, who showed me the workings of lotus biomass harvest. I have many more stories but not enough room to tell them all.

I started the Water Artisans of the Year contest, which just completed its 9th year. Rick Smith (now retired

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from EasyPro) came up with the idea and contacted me about it. POND Trade has enjoyed presenting the winners in each March/April issue. It is a contest for all pond builders, no matter whom you buy from or are affiliated with — the only one of its kind in our industry. It has been extremely popular, and the talent out there blows my mind every single year.

I've had some really great help over the years, many of whom you have met or spoke or emailed with. My editor Jordan is my right-hand man and ace headline writer. If you've written for POND Trade, you've been touched by Jordan's editing skills. Even if your article came in a bit on the rough side, you would look as though you went to journalism school after he polished it up. Then there's our web editor Joanne, who gets the digital version up and running and also does our social media. She really knows her stuff and takes a big load off of my plate. I'm still missing my sidekick Lois Spano, who was my bookkeeper and oldest friend. Many of you worked with her when it came to billing. She unfortunately passed away a year ago, and I've done my best dealing with numbers — definitely not my thing.


New owner/publisher Lauren Nolan with Lora Lee.

Looking Downstream

The magazine is in really good hands moving forward. Lauren Nolan is taking over as of March 6. You may have noticed her in the wings over the last year. She has met many of you at various events, and I've been showing her the ropes over the last few months. She brings young blood to the table and is sharp as a tack. She has a teaching and marketing background and is up on social media. She has many good ideas, and I can't wait to see how she implements them as she takes over. Plus, she is such a sweet person. You're going to love her. I feel confident that this is great news for the future of the magazine.

Thank you all for being part of my world for the last 12 years. It's been a slice!



New Beginnings



Hello POND Trade Community! My name is Lauren Nolan, your new go-to girl for POND Trade Magazine. Throughout the past few years, I have had the honor to learn about the pond and water feature industry from the inside out. My introduction to POND Trade first came in the way of writing and creating ads for the magazine. I very quickly became an avid reader, looking forward to its arrival every other month. I became enthralled with the quality and artistry that was presented in every issue, and needless to say, I am constantly impressed by all of you!

When this opportunity came my way, I would be lying if I said I wasn't a bit anxious with how a newbie like me would be received within this already established community. However, after working alongside Lora Lee and getting to meet many of you at various industry events, my sentiments have changed. I now simply feel honored to have been chosen. It has become evident through working alongside her that Lora Lee loves you all and cherishes the relationships built through the years. It is my hope to forge long-lasting relationships of our own in the near future. Through training for the takeover, my appreciation of the industry and the platform Lora Lee has created for all of you to share your work and your lives, which I know are often intertwined, has only deepened.

It is truly my honor to continue to serve you, grow with you, and partner with you all in advancing the industry as a whole as we take this journey together. I am always open for a chat, an email, or a new idea. I am proud to be the partner chosen to carry the legacy of POND Trade onward, and I look forward to supporting each other through it all.





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Latest News From EasyPro Pond Products

EasyPro Pond Products was excited and honored to have many products featured in the Water Garden Expo's Group Swim Pond Build. This advanced level swim pond incorporated cutting-edge products and installation techniques and was organized and hosted by the Pond Professionals Alliance.



After collaborating with premier professional rec pond builders, EasyPro developed an innovative Wetland Filtration System for recreational ponds. This high-performance system is modular and easy to install, saving pond builders time and money in installation, labor and materials. At the heart of this system is EasyPro's new Pit Viper diffuser module. Pit Viper modules fit and function seamlessly with EasyBog Cubes and Res-Cubes, allowing pond builders to create a wetland-filtration system more quickly with no trenching, less liner and much less gravel. It's next-level wetland filtration! For more information on EasyPro's wetland-filtration system, swim-pond kits and components, visit www.easypro.com for a catalog.

EasyPro is on the road, and we'd love to see you at one of these upcoming events:

Michigan Green Industry Association, Novi, Michigan (March 4-5)
Water Garden Expo, Shawnee, Oklahoma (March 5-7)
All-American Koi Show, Las Vegas, Nevada (March 28-31)
Aquatic Plant Management Society, Providence, Rhode Island (July 14-17)
Hardscape North America, Louisville, Kentucky (Oct. 22-24)



Aquascape Introduces Heavy-Duty Rock Pad Sling

The Heavy-Duty Rock Pad Sling simplifies the process of moving and positioning heavy rocks during water-feature installations. Crafted from extra-thick geotextile fabric, this durable pad not only protects your liner during rock placement, but it also remains beneath the boulders for long-term protection.

Featuring six integrated hand holes, the sling allows two to four people to safely and accurately move rocks weighing up to 500 pounds. The hand holes are also compatible with lifting straps, making the sling ideal for use with machinery.

Additionally, it's versatile enough to transport smaller cobbles for constructing rock walls, waterfalls, or other elements of your water feature. It is available in convenient packs of 10, each pad measuring 3 by 5 feet.

For information about Aquascape Inc. and its products and services, visit www.aquascapeinc.com or call 866/877-6637 (US) or 866/766-3426 (CAN).



Blue Thumb's Most Popular Fountain Spurs Creativity

When we launched our 24-inch Blue Thumb Crystal Sphere, we didn't expect it to become our most popular fountain of 2024. Customers loved the perpetually flowing ball of water so much that we created a 14-inch Crystal Sphere version for smaller spaces. The crystal-clear acrylic sphere rests on a custom acrylic plate and stand. This assembly sits in a 28-inch powder-coated black bowl, which beautifully spills over into the 36-inch Achelous Basin for recirculation.

At night, the included LED lights infuse the fountain with a spectrum of colors, enhancing the visual spectacle. This package is complete with polished pebbles, a 660-gph magnetic drive pump and all required plumbing to ensure a simple setup. Embrace tranquility and style with this exquisite centerpiece. Purchase at: **www.shopbluethumb.com/crystal-sphere-fountain-kit-14dia/**

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The HIBLOW Adjustable Height Diffuser has six height options ranging from 11 ½ to 35 ½ inches, allowing linear aerators to be used in ponds up to 13 feet in depth. Linear aerators are quiet, energy efficient, and easy to maintain and repair — a cost-efficient alternative to rocking-piston technology.



The Adjustable Height Diffuser keeps the medium-bubble diffuser sticks out of the muck and vegetation, preventing harmful anaerobic matter from spreading throughout the pond. Raise the diffuser in the winter to keep a hole in the ice without mixing the bottom of the pond, allowing fish to take refuge in warmer water while allowing toxic gas to escape.

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Oase PROFESSIONAL

W. Lim Corporation Announces 2nd Annual All-American Koi Show with Expanded Educational Seminar Series

W. Lim Corporation proudly presents the 2nd Annual All-American Koi Show returning to Las Vegas from March 28-30, 2025. This year, the show introduces an exciting Educational Seminar Series featuring industry experts from around the world. The event will culminate in a special awards banquet on Saturday night highlighted by an exclusive performance from Pepa of Salt-N-Pepa.



Held in the heart of Las Vegas, the All-American Koi Show continues to celebrate the art and excellence of koi keeping, bringing together hobbyists, professionals and top breeders from across the globe. Building on the success of its inaugural event, the 2025 show will provide an unparalleled educational experience, offering koi enthusiasts and pond professionals a unique opportunity to learn from leading experts in the field.

Educational Seminar Highlights

Starting Friday, March 28, and continuing into the first day of the show on Saturday, March 29, the seminar series will feature renowned experts covering critical topics in koi care, pond management and business growth:

Friday, March 28 - Seminar Series
- UV & Ozone Basics – Hector Mardueño, W. Lim Corporation
- Incorporating Wetlands Filtration Into Dedicated Koi Ponds – Ed Beaulieu "The Pond Professor"
- Q&A with "The Pond Guy" – Aquascape Founder Greg Wittstock
- Marketing & Contractor Sales Mastery – Eric Triplett "The Pond Digger"
- Feeding Champions: Nutrition & Growth – Ryuichi Yoshida, JPD
- Selecting the Perfect Koi – Shigeyoshi Tanaka, Marujyu Koi Farm
- Fishing for the Right Diagnostic – Dr. Esteban Soto, UC Davis
- Koi Pond Construction & Advanced Filtration from Around the World – Yvo DeWal & Kyle Weemhoff

These sessions will provide valuable insights into koi health, water quality, filtration techniques, nutrition, marketing strategies and global pond-construction practices. Whether you're a seasoned koi keeper or new to the hobby, this seminar series is a must-attend event for those seeking to elevate their knowledge and skills.

Event Highlights
- Educational Seminars Begin: Friday, March 28, 2025
- All-American Koi Show Opens: Saturday, March 29, 2025
- Awards Banquet & Exclusive Performance by Pepa (Salt-N-Pepa): Saturday Night

The 2nd Annual All-American Koi Show is set to be an unforgettable weekend of education, competition and celebration. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from world-renowned experts, connect with fellow koi enthusiasts and experience a premier koi event in Las Vegas!

For more information & registration, visit www.allamericankoishow.com or contact 626/579-1280.

25th Anniversary of Pond-O-Rama Water Garden Tour

In 2025, the St. Louis Water Garden Society (SLWGS) celebrates 35 years of bringing together water-garden enthusiasts for education, community service and resource sharing.

The public is invited to enjoy the Society's 25th annual water garden and pond tour, Pond-O-Rama 2025, on Saturday, June 21, and Sunday, June 22, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The 2025 tour will feature private water gardens owned and maintained by Society members, with each day featuring different gardens.

This self-guided tour highlights water gardens located throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area, arranged each day by geographic location, including many new and upgraded gardens, ponds and waterfalls. The full color ticket booklet contains host garden pictures, descriptions of the water features, directions, accessibility and a QR code to each location.



Showcasing a wide variety of water gardens from new to well established, intimate spaces to whole yards, and featuring bridges, gazebos, koi and goldfish, waterfalls, statues, bubblers and much more, our hosts are eager to share their gardens and expertise with the public. Many hosts are master gardeners and have Audubon Society (Bring Conservation Home) certified native landscapes. Others have been featured in St. Louis Homes and Lifestyle magazine and local newspapers and magazines.

Whether you are thinking of adding a water feature to your own garden, seeking new gardening ideas or simply looking to enjoy tranquil landscapes and a weekend filled with beauty, this is the tour for you!

In 2025, we are highlighting our civic project, the planting and maintaining of the elegant and serene lily ponds at the Jewel Box in Forest Park. The St Louis Water Garden Society's members work weekly from May to October to make the lily ponds gorgeous for the visitors who come to Forest Park. Our civic project is funded by the Pond-O-Rama tour each year.

Tickets covering both days of the tour are $25 (18 years and older) and will be available beginning in May at local retail shops and garden centers throughout the metropolitan area or on our website **(www.slwgs.org)**. As a special 2025 discount, groups of 5 or more may attend for only $20 each. Please see the SLWGS website for more information.

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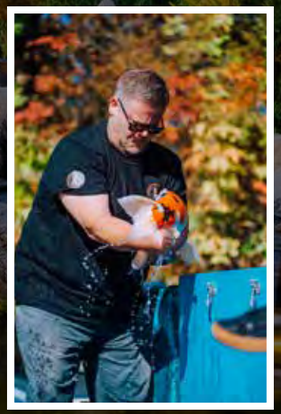
FINAL THOUGHT...



Beauty and the Beast

Photo by Gary Wittstock

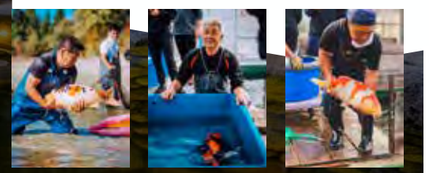




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