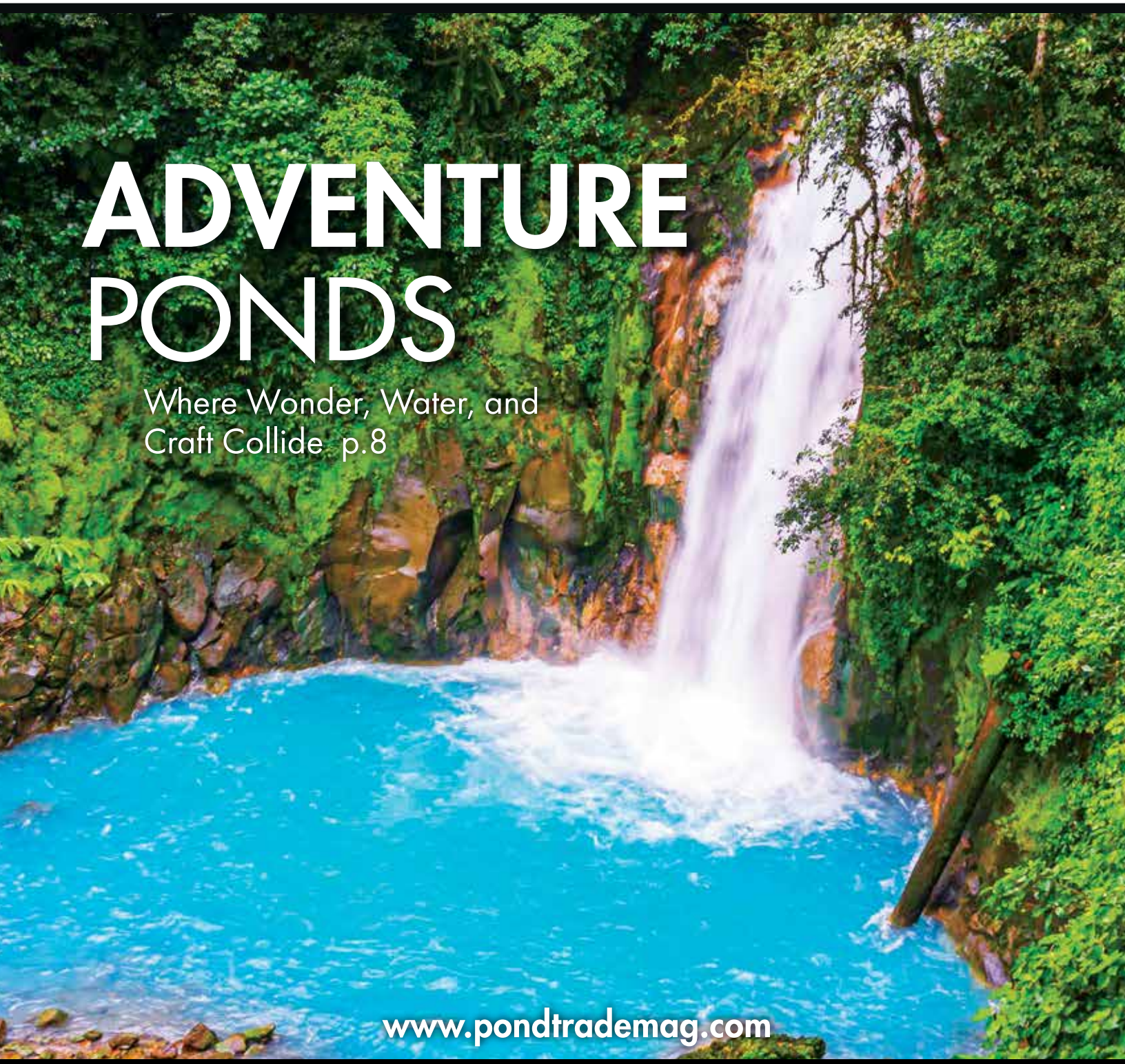
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ADVENTURE PONDS

Where Wonder, Water, and Craft Collide p.8

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Presenting the Dream p.17 | Bonsai & Koi p.24 | Lessons in Longevity p.41

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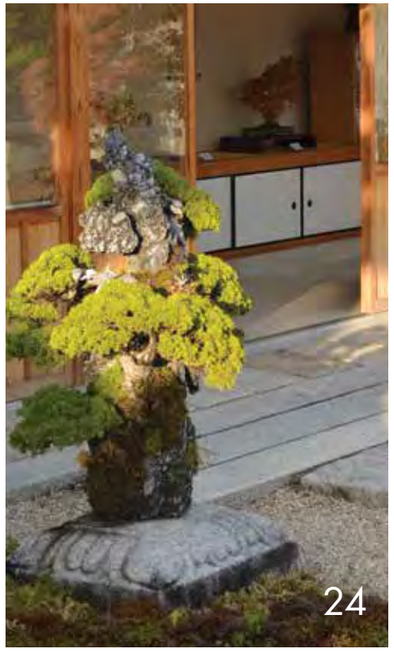
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30 **Re-Cap of Mid-South Pond Retreat**

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LANGUAGE OF KOI From the first cool mornings in Iowa to the final indoor transfers, **Ellen Kloubec** takes readers inside fall harvest on a family-run American koi farm, revealing the care, teamwork and health-focused practices that turn a season of growth into vibrant, high-quality koi ready for the next stage.

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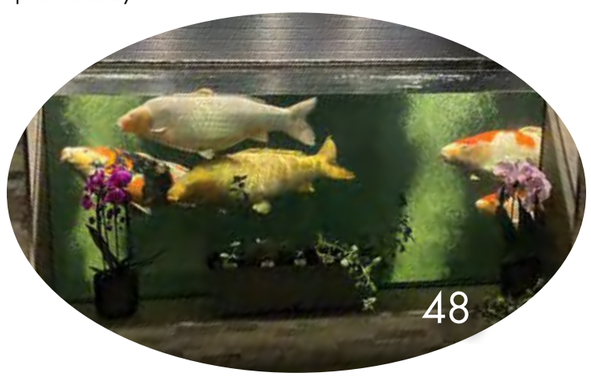
In this candid, boots-on-the-ground perspective, **Mike Gannon** breaks down what aspiring pond professionals quickly learn the hard way: building ponds means mastering far more than excavation, blending biology, design, logistics, customer service and business acumen into a career that rewards true all-around expertise.

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52 **Built To Rock: Atlantic Oase Conference**

Lauren Nolan recaps the 2025 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference, highlighting the education, innovation and industry camaraderie that defined the event—from hands-on technical training and business strategy to meaningful connections, awards and a rock-and-roll celebration that showcased the heart of the pond industry.









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2026

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Wyndham Avanti Resort
Orlando, FL
www.cfks.org

March 7 - 8
Koi Club of San Diego 36th Annual Koi Show
Del Mar Fairgrounds
Del Mar, CA
www.koiclubofsandiego.org

March 11 - 13
Water Garden Expo
Grand Casino Hotel & Resort
Shawnee, OK
www.wgexpo.com

March 27 - 29
All American Koi Show
Las Vegas, NV
www.allamericankoishow.com

April 10 - 12
Music City Koi Show
Nashville Zoo at Grassmere
Nashville, TN
www.tnkoi.org/music-city-koi-show

June 27 - 28
Pond-o-rama
St. Louis Water Garden Society
St. Louis, MO
https://slwgs.org/pond-o-rama/

August 15 - 18
Pondemonium
Aqualand
St. Charles, IL
www.aquascapeinc.com/professionals/pondemonium

August 21 - 22
Koi Fest 2026
Fitz's Fish Ponds Farm
Milford, NJ
www.fitzfishponds.com

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Publisher's Perspective



As I worked through this issue, one theme surfaced again and again: creativity in its most expansive form. Not just creativity as artistry—but creativity as problem-solving, adaptability, passion and perseverance. From massive adventure pond builds and refined presentation techniques, to breeding koi, curating bonsai and sustaining multi-generational businesses, creativity truly runs in the blood of everyone in this industry. It's what allows us to juggle the many hats we wear each day—designer, builder, caretaker, educator, marketer and business owner—often all before lunch.

That creativity is something I'm constantly inspired by. I see it daily across social media feeds filled with innovative builds, thoughtful details and bold ideas pushed just a little further. I see it, too, in the Water Artisan of the Year entries that have already begun to come in—each one a reminder that our industry is fueled by individuals who are unafraid to blend imagination with craftsmanship and heart.

This issue opens with "Adventure Ponds", where Dave Duensing demonstrates how pushing creative boundaries in water features demands vision balanced with engineering and responsibility (p.8). From there, the focus shifts to communication in "Presenting the Dream", as Dean Pipito shows how visualization, trust and confident presentation turn ideas into buildable realities (p.17). A more contemplative expression of creativity emerges in "Bonsai & Koi: A Perfect Partnership", where Cooper Sallade connects patience, heritage and living design to deeper client engagement (p.24). Community-driven creativity comes into focus in our "Mid-South Pond Retreat Recap", highlighting the impact of education, coaching and collaboration when professionals gather to learn and grow together (p.30). We return to the theme of thoughtful process in "Fall Harvest on an American Koi Farm", as Ellen Kloubec brings readers into the seasonal rhythm of a family-run operation driven by planning and care (p.34). Longevity itself is examined in "Lessons in Longevity", with Hank DeWaal III. reflecting on how adaptation and consistency sustain specialty retail across generations (p.41). Expanding the scope, Mike Gannon's "Beyond the Shovel" reminds us that successful pond building requires creativity across biology, design and business—not just construction (p.45). A broader perspective follows in "Across the Pond", where Tim Waddington compares U.S. and U.K. pond cultures, revealing how environment and tradition shape creative approaches on both sides of the Atlantic (p.48). The issue concludes with "Built to Rock", my recap of the 2025 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference, celebrating an industry rooted in innovation, connection and shared passion (p.53).

As you move through this issue, I hope you recognize a bit of yourself in these stories. Creativity in our industry doesn't live in just one discipline—it shows up in how we design, how we problem-solve, how we care for living systems and how we build lasting relationships with clients and each other. It's what allows this industry to continually evolve while staying rooted in craftsmanship and community. That shared creative spirit is what makes pond professionals so unique—and it's what continues to push our industry forward.

Until the next splash,
Lauren Nolan
Publisher, POND Trade Magazine





This 18' tall x 9' wide waterfall was designed to have adventurous family and friends jump and or dive off of it into the deep Blue Hole below. The flow rate, as seen here is approximately 4,000gpm.

ADVENTURE PONDS

Where Wonder, Water, and Craft Collide

by David Duensing,
Aquatic Construction Services, LLC

As professional pond and waterfall designers and builders, we usually find ourselves working with a theme, such as a koi pond, backyard water garden, grotto waterfall, estate pond, etc. These types of features are designed to encourage tranquility, to enjoy aquatic plants, or to attract wildlife. So, what kind of questions will quickly pop into your mind if a prospect calls and requests an Adventure Pond?

There are so many questions to ask, and many are not typical. I think my first few questions were something along the lines of "What do you consider adventurous?", "Who are you expecting to use this Adventure Pond?", "How large of an Adventure Pond are



On our immersion trip into the local forest, we were able to see first-hand, the design elements the client wanted included in the Adventure Pond. We waded through several streams, some quite deep and others swift. Climbed up steep, and sometimes quite narrow cracks and crevices to access the tops of waterfalls. Some which we jumped off of and others we swam up to and relaxed in front of.



you considering?", and "What is the timeframe for the start and completion?" Certainly, the money or budget questions will follow shortly.

As I'm asking these questions, my mind is racing forward, trying to visualize what this prospect is really talking about. I certainly don't have any Adventure Ponds in my portfolio to use as a reference. I can definitely say that many of our projects were an adventure to build, but the end result was always intended to be peaceful and natural-looking.

The Immersion Trip That Changed Everything

After that initial call and several video conferences later, a site meeting trip was set up, and here is where the adventure really began. Our client was so determined to make his goal and vision clear that for day two of the meeting he arranged a professionally managed immersion trip into a remote part of the country for the heads of the design and construction team.

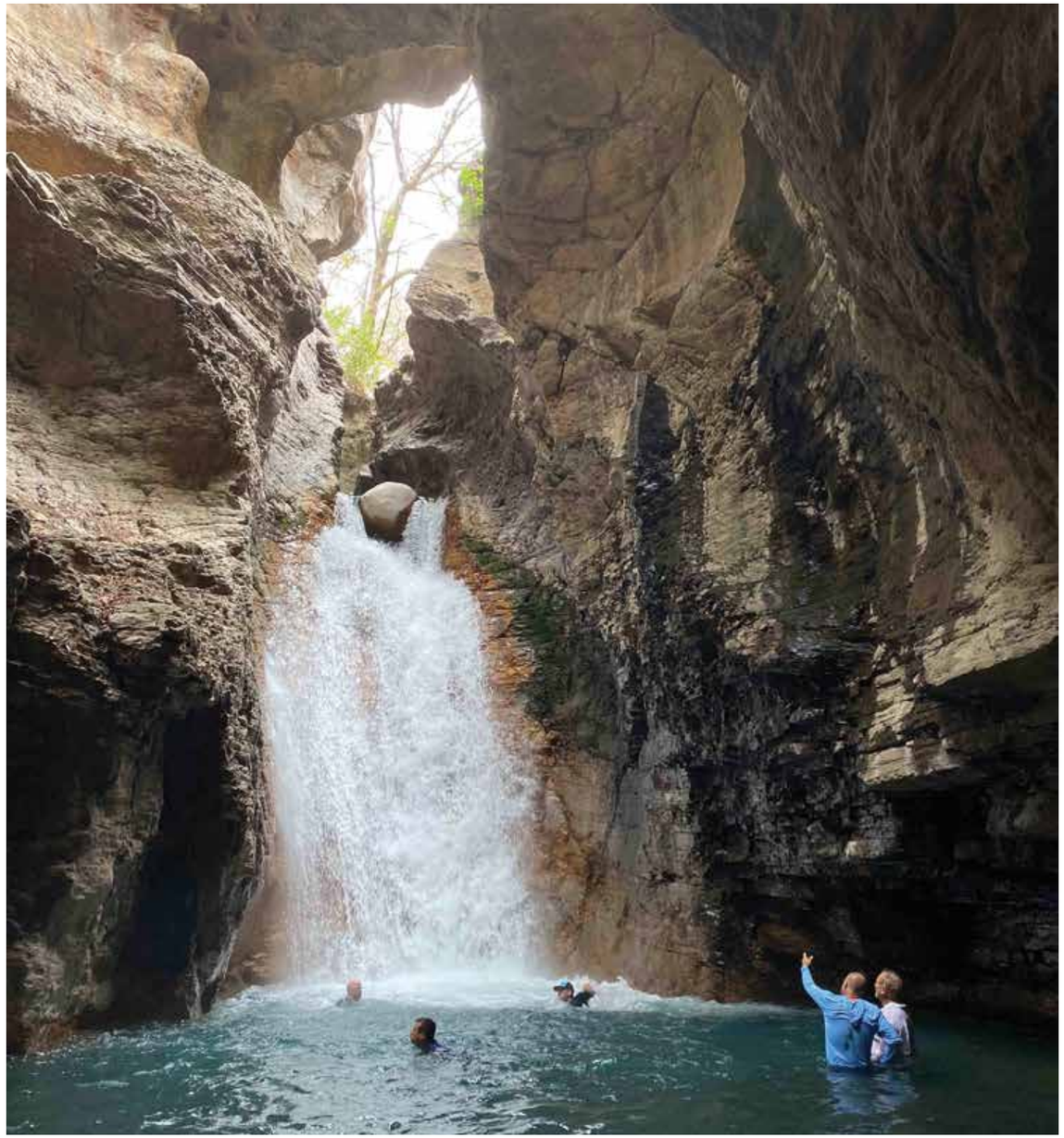
So, very early the next morning we drove for several hours before trekking off into the dense mountain forest. We swam in deep blue pools, crawled over rocks, climbed into grottos, waded up streams through narrow canyons, jumped off waterfalls, and explored underwater rock formations. Quite an eye-opening experience. So, after a full day of exploring and team building, we were quite exhausted but full of ideas, excited about the possibilities, and very motivated to start developing the Adventure Pond.

Setting Priorities for an Adventure Pond

At the design meeting the next day, scheduled to start after lunch because everyone was tired, beaten up and bruised, several priorities were identified early:

- A tall, wide, sheer waterfall designed for jumping, with a minimum height of 15 to 20 feet and a width of at least 8 feet.
- A deep pool at the base of the waterfall, immediately named the Blue Hole.
- Rugged access from the Blue Hole to the top of the waterfall.
- Heavy water flow over the main waterfall, with reduced flow on secondary cascading waterfalls alongside it.
- An expansive, semi-hidden grotto behind the waterfall designed for rock climbing, with ledges for sitting or diving.
- Underwater rock formations for exploration and swimming.
- Several semi-submerged rock formations and islands in the Blue Hole large enough to accommodate multiple people for sitting or sunbathing.
- A tall rope swing.

With the client being so involved early on, it was easy and quick to qualify ideas, discard others and get approval, or be asked to come up with better ideas or solutions. With the plans moving forward rapidly we moved into scheduling, which is always a dance between goals, fantasy, reality and execution.



The timeframe from the moment this meeting ended to full operation of the Adventure Pond was absurdly short — eight months between breaking ground and jumping off the tall waterfall. The overriding factors that made this all possible were that the assembled team were all can-do people who had extensive planning and construction experience, excellent resources of crew, equipment and materials, management and communication skills, and, to top it off, a motivated client.

Designing the Blue Hole and Upper Pond

As the project was being designed and then laid out on site, being sure to nest it properly onto the steep hillside, it became clear that this would need to be a concrete structure. The lower basin, or the Blue Hole as it will be forever named, was going to be 135 feet wide by 115 feet long and 16 feet deep. The vertical waterfall/grotto structure and the rock terrace walls would rise steeply, almost a sheer 20 feet



View of both the waterfall structure with scaffolding in the background, and the suction pipe balance chamber in the foreground. To the right and left of the waterfall structure, and above the balance chamber, will be 20' tall, terraced rock walls and landscaping.

above the Blue Hole.

The upper pond, which was intended to be very peaceful and have killer views, was an elongated shape so it could wrap into the hillside, but straight enough to allow for a 25-meter swimming lane. The waterfall weir ended up sitting about 18 feet above the water in the Blue Hole with a finished wet weir of approximately 9 feet. The maximum flow we planned for the waterfall was to be an immense 4,000 gpm for that WOW factor. Normal flow for jumping and diving was expected to be approximately half or two-thirds of that, or 2,000–3,000 gpm.

Massive Pumps, Safety Considerations and Innovative Engineering

With the project being built of concrete, it allowed for large storage and equipment rooms adjacent to the Blue Hole, which provided for some easy suction and return pipe runs to and from the pumps. For this project, we decided to use four 25 hp variable-speed pumps for the main waterfall, with smaller pumps providing circulation and filtration.

With this amount of waterflow potential, drowning and entrapment safety issues were discussed early on. Besides the human safety factor, we needed to address clogging of the inlets from leaves and other debris. The inlet system would have to diffuse the water velocity to safe levels but maintain maximum flow volume.

Ultimately, we decided to split, or tee, all of the four pumps' suction pipes and spread them out in a row on a single wall. Next, we built a concrete balancing chamber around them, with the top of the chamber being approximately 4 feet tall, and the front wall 4 feet away from the pond sidewall. In the front wall of the balancing chamber, we built eight 3-by-3-foot openings, which we planned to cover with removable composite grates.

This common chamber, or balancing chamber technique, allowed us to greatly reduce water velocity at any one point. By design, even if one or two grates became partially clogged, there would still be sufficient open area in the other grates to make this area of the pond safe for swimmers.

To further enhance the safety factor, and to hide the concrete chamber structure, we trimmed the ends off of a dozen long rocks so they would be 4 feet long and could be stood upright on the cut end. We placed these pedestal rocks in random locations, 2 to 4 feet in front of the inlet grates. These tall sturdy vertical rocks looked like trees in a forest when we were done. Now that we had sturdy supports in front of the inlet chamber, we began setting large rock slabs horizontally across the top of the inlet chamber and onto the rock pedestals, further limiting access by swimmers.

Bringing in a Tower Crane and Organizing the Rockwork

Since the project was immense, on a steep hillside, and construction time was a factor, a traditional or even an all-terrain crane was not going to be an option. What we needed was an industrial tower crane that could provide substantial lift capacity at 135 feet of reach. The tower crane ultimately gave us great access to our rock staging area on one side of the crane and our full work area on the other side.



Two rows of suction pipes, the lower row of larger diameter pipes being used for the main waterfall and the smaller diameter, upper row of pipes for some of the filtration systems.



This shows the balance chamber with composite grates installed over the inlet openings.



A tower crane was determined to be the safest, quickest, and most cost-effective way to move rocks and many other types of construction materials around this steep project site. As the project neared completion, this crane was disassembled, hauled off and all-terrain cranes and excavators were used to wrap up the details.

I have to say, it was quite remarkable to see all the segments of crane structure and its concrete counterweights arriving on several semi-trucks. It required another large crane to offload the trucks and assemble the tower crane.

With all the planning and preparations underway, and the crane operational, it was finally time to start organizing the rock inventory. One of the issues with the larger projects, especially those on hillsides, is that when the materials, such as rocks, start flooding in, they are unloaded and often packed together so tight it is almost impossible to see the shapes and character of individual rocks. It took a full week of crane time just to sort through, organize and stage the rock in various areas of the project.

Building the Waterfall, Grotto and Rope Swing Experience

Due to the height difference of the upper and lower pond — almost 20 feet — there was a significant amount of rock, concrete and drainage material used to build the tall terrace walls. It certainly helped knowing that the landscaping was planned to be very lush, because it allowed us to plan for hiding the non-descript and ugly rocks we knew would materialize from our stockpile.

To access the jumping or diving ledge at the top of the waterfall, visitors begin at the Blue Hole, where a rugged, irregular rock staircase rises to the left of the falls. Along the ascent, they must navigate multiple cascading waterfalls and maneuver past a large cantilevered tree trunk. The trunk, an actual tree, has a rope attached to its end, allowing daring guests to swing far out over the Blue Hole before letting go.

As they continue upward, visitors pass several rock outcroppings that allow for diving, jumping or simply sitting back to watch the activity below. Behind the falling water, the grotto reveals another adventure area, with small ledges for rock climbing and larger ledges that provide a dramatic perch for those who prefer to observe.

Underwater Adventures: Caverns, Tunnels and Semi-Submerged Rocks

The Blue Hole is quite large and deep — 16 feet deep, in fact — allowing for more adventures. To encourage family and friends to explore underwater, we installed many large rock slabs as veneers on the underwater sidewalls and constructed large rock formations similar to what we encountered on our immersion trip.

Some of these rock formations formed irregular caverns or tunnel-like sections at different depths that a person could swim through. On the shallower swim-throughs, the semi-submerged slabs that made the cavern ceilings were of considerable size, allowing a half dozen swimmers to climb out of the water and onto them for a break. These oversized semi-submerged rocks have now





Left: Two crews are setting one of the ceiling rocks on top of a deep swim-through. - Center: End view of one of the higher swim-through structures. - Right: This shows the finished look of the center image swim-through. Note the semi-submerged cap rock, which allows swimmers to climb up onto a dry surface and watch those adventurous souls jumping or diving off the tall waterfall or using the rope swing.

become a popular location to sit and judge how dramatic the jumpers and divers perform their aerial feats.

Managing Crew Fatigue and Maintaining Artistic Quality

As the days, weeks and months flew by, it's only normal to feel like progress was moving at a snail's pace, the artistic and creative edge was waning, and nothing ever seemed to change, much like in the movie "Groundhog Day." To control the negative effects of this, ACS and its team of subcontractors were rotated on and off the project on a regular basis. We found this helped to ensure a safe working environment and to maintain the high level of artistic workmanship demanded throughout the project.

As we scheduled crew rotations, we always wanted to be sure there was at least one ACS crew who remained onsite to take charge and make sure the work consistently moved forward.

Near the Finish Line: Pressure, Excitement and Last-Minute Changes

As we hit milestones on the project and were getting to the halfway and then three-quarters of the way through the project, we started noticing the client was returning more often and getting visibly excited as well. As is to be expected, there are always going to be certain questions asked, like "How are things going?", "Do you like the progress?", "What do you think about changing this, or adding that?", and the big one, "Do you think we are going to get it done on time?"



A wide view of the Blue Hole and tall waterfall under construction. The tower crane has been removed, the tree swing is being worked on, and the pond has approximately 6' of water in it. The lower swim-trough, on the far side of the pond is almost covered by water and the upper swim-through on the right side of the Blue Hole, is still high and dry.

The First Flow of Water: A Once-in-a-Lifetime Moment

Finally, the eventful day arrives, and the pumps are going to be run up for the first time. As exciting as this moment is, inside you know of a half dozen catastrophic events that could take place if someone was forgetful or careless. Fortunately, by using variable-speed pumps we could ramp up the flow and manage the startup process.

What was most interesting about this flow and leak testing period was that while most of the ACS team was spread out around the project, focused on flow and leak testing details, a crowd of 50 to 60 workers, who had never been involved in the construction of a water feature before this project, started to assemble in small clusters around the Blue Hole taking pictures. As always, it was a breathtaking moment to see the first water pouring over the weir and watch it steadily grow in volume.

The workers, who were now spectators, got to experience the roar of the falling water and felt the wind in their faces as they stood taking it all in. As I looked around, I was really proud not only of the group of men I brought to the project but of all the other individuals who probably had not understood or envisioned what they were actually building, but who worked steadily and effortlessly together to make it all happen.

Why the First Drop Never Gets Old

I realized early on in my career that there is only one first time for water to flow over a new waterfall, so you have to stop and embrace that moment, that event. It still sends chills up my spine and always makes me smile, at least inside. I know there are many of you out there who are passionate about waterfalls and can appreciate the moment when you flip a switch and bring another form of life into the world.

That moment when you see the first flow of water run around and across the tops of the rocks, fill up what were earlier dry basins, and ultimately the first drop off the weir — it's priceless.

A Salute to Waterfall and Stream Builders

To all of you who are passionate and enjoy the art of waterfall and stream constructing, congratulations on finding a rewarding career.



Here is Dave, in his "happy place". Finally able to enjoy a quiet relaxing swim, by himself in the Blue Hole. A perfect time to reflect about, and enjoy the rewards of all the hard work, by many individuals, and the team effort that was required to build such a unique pond, spectacular waterfalls, and adventurous environment.

About the Author



David B. Duensing, a longtime waterscape and hardscape designer and builder, has an extreme passion for natural rock. Over the last few decades, he has developed sources for some magnificent examples of rock, which often come with a story. Having spent nearly as much time in search of perfect rocks as he has in constructing and placing those rocks, Dave's resources for natural rock are as broad and multifaceted as they are interesting, and a valuable asset to gardens and landscapes. After the creation of David B. Duensing & Associates Inc in 1989, Duensing focused his efforts on learning and perfecting the design and construction techniques required to perform at the top of the industry. In 2006, he formed Aquatic Construction Services (ACS) which specializes in the construction aspect of natural rock formations and living water features. In 2019, Dave created a division within ACS that assists other professional and landowners in sourcing the very best natural rock possible for specific projects and clients.

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TO INSTALLATION

The Art of Presenting the Dream

by Dean Pipito,
Aquatica

One of the most challenging aspects of the pond and waterscape industry is helping clients visualize a masterpiece that doesn't yet exist. As designers, we are often tasked with presenting a concept that lives only in our imagination. I mean, how do you paint a Mona Lisa before it is painted? Explaining sight, sound, scale and movement before a single rock is placed is one of the most difficult challenges we face every day as pond artisans. Not only must we help the client conceptualize our vision, but then we also need to sell it. For this reason, mastering the presentation process becomes just as important as mastering the craft itself.

Like many in the industry, my background began in landscape design. Working with architects, city officials, foremen, homeowners and HOAs taught me how to communicate ideas clearly and confidently. But when I launched my company, Aquatica, more than 26 years ago, I quickly learned that presenting pond projects required a completely different approach. Water is dynamic, emotional and experiential — and clients need help understanding what that means for their property.



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Over the years, that lesson shaped how I develop presentations, communicate vision and guide clients through the design process. While every company will approach this differently, there are several universally effective strategies that pond professionals rely on today.

Building Trust Before Building the Pond

Trust serves as the foundation of every successful presentation. Clients may know they want a water feature, but they often have no idea what style, size or form it should take. They may not understand stone types, elevations, hydraulics or even why they're drawn to water in the first place — only that they are.

What we, as artists and professionals, do is like a fingerprint — no two water features are the same. While it can be difficult to zero in on a customer's vision, it also becomes our responsibility. It becomes our job to uncover those motivations through conversation, questions and observation.

Key considerations often include:

- What experience does the client want to create?
- How will the water feature be used day to day?
- What size project are they envisioning?
- What aesthetic direction feels most natural to them? Will it be formal or natural? What kind of stone will be used?

The bottom line is you must try to get into the customer's head, learn how to gain their trust and ultimately get hired to bring that vision to life. Remember, not everyone is your customer. The relationship must be a good fit, and gaining trust is the single most powerful tool in presenting the vision and building the dream.

Pro Tip: *Build a human relationship before presenting the artistic one. Find something in common that you and the client both have that has nothing to do with ponds and water features. Use this as a common bond.*



Pond tours are a great way to inspire people to build with your company and the tour in itself can be a great presentation of possibilities and ideas.

When the Site Meeting Is the Presentation

There are occasions when a simple site meeting and discussion is all that is needed. You are the presentation, and they trust your thoughts and ideas. One strategy we use at Aquatica is to provide the customer with our Aquatica Dream Book, which contains examples of our projects. From there we are able to brainstorm their ideas. Then, the customer takes a leap and puts everything into your hands. They want to hire you on the spot and ask, "When can you start?"

This is the ideal client — but a rarity to find.

Over many years of building a brand, the presentation of your company and the reputation it has generated will create a confidence that makes clients want not just anyone, but you as the professional.

Visualizing With Ground Markings and Quick Sketches

For smaller or straightforward backyard projects, physical ground markings can be one of the clearest and most effective presentation tools. Using marking spray paint or a garden hose to outline the future pond or stream helps homeowners grasp size, flow direction and real-world proportions. This can be simple and highly effective in the right situation and a great way to present an idea and design.



On site sketches and measurements are done on almost every consultation.

Some designers also bring sketch pads to produce fast, rough 2D sketches on-site. While not formal renderings, these sketches can spark excitement and help confirm that designer and homeowner are imagining the same concept.

Pro Tip: *When clients contribute to early sketches or layout ideas, they feel ownership in the process and it gets them even more excited for the build.*



2D sketches are one of our most used and best approaches to presenting a water feature design. They usually will accompany the proposal and be a great way to layout a great idea.



Rendering Options for Project Visualization

In pond construction, renderings are a powerful presentation tool, allowing clients to visualize water flow, elevation changes, rock placement, and overall scale before a single stone is set. From hand-drawn concepts to 3D models and photorealistic renderings, these visuals help communicate design intent, refine details, and align expectations early. Strong presentation renderings build client confidence, support approvals, and set the foundation for smoother, more successful pond builds.

2D Renderings: The Presentation Powerhouse

Colored 2D renderings remain one of the most widely used and effective presentation tools in the industry. Drawn to scale or digitally, they provide a clear, artistic representation of the proposed feature. In addition to helping clients visualize the design through a professional presentation appearance, there are many practical benefits of 2D renderings. They are a great way to "plug in" a water feature into a landscape design already in progress with a landscape company and can provide clear communication of scale, style and elevation to both the client and your




2D sketches are great in getting the client and crew on the same page.

construction team. They also serve as reliable reference material throughout the build.

At Aquatica, our single best approach to pond presentations is a 2D colored rendering in 1/8-inch or 1/4-inch scale. We take measurements at the initial client meeting, then bring the sketch and measurements back to the office and create a presentation-worthy rendering for a second meeting where we present the rendering and written proposal. Charpak markers, pencil and pen are used to complete these 2D renderings. I'm still old school and draw everything by hand. This hands-on approach adds artistic flair to the presentation and reinforces the idea that we are "creating a piece of artwork" in their backyard.

So many of our clients end up loving these renderings and even have them framed or displayed as part of the pond experience.

Ultimately, 2D renderings add professionalism, confidence and excitement to a project.

> ***Pro Tip:*** *A 2D rendering gives your construction crew a clear launch point. It helps them understand the layout, scale and style so they can focus on artistry.*

3D Renderings: A Powerful Tool With Caveats

3D renderings and modeling software have become increasingly accessible. Platforms such as SketchUp, Uvision, Enscape, Realtime and others allow designers to produce immersive visuals and realistic water motion. Water graphics and ease of use are improving every year. It is mind-blowing to see a project come to life before it is even built.

3D renderings can be especially useful for larger or complex projects, for presentations to boards or committees, complicated or high-budget jobs, collaborations with landscape companies or at the request of homeowners who need to see the vision ahead of time.

However, with increased realism comes increased risk. If the final product differs from the model, even artistically, clients may feel the discrepancy. That's why clear expectations are


A nighttime 3D example can be very powerful and help to give the customer an amazing gaze into the future of their project!

essential. The goal is inspiration, not duplication. Setting the stage that the team will employ creative freedom on site as the actual feature is being built becomes increasingly important.

With all the great things 3D can offer, I am still a little apprehensive about using this approach with clients. 3D can stifle the project if the real-life result doesn't match expectations. It is time-consuming, expensive and may overwhelm or intimidate a client as costs add up. And depending on timing, it may impact schedule expectations.

Ultimately, while 3D renderings are a powerful tool, they must be used thoughtfully to ensure expectations remain realistic and the design process stays flexible.

The Written Proposal: Describing a Water Feature Without a Drawing

Even with advanced visual tools, written proposals remain a core part of the process. Detailed, descriptive language helps clients understand the flow of water, the feel of stonework and how the feature will interact with the landscape. Over the years, we have prided ourselves on having proposals that are written descriptions of the project we will create. It is not easy to describe a water feature so that a client can visualize the product. An example of this might read something like:

"A winding and meandering stream will cascade 25 feet down the hillside into the reflection pond. Stream to include twists and turns, wider and



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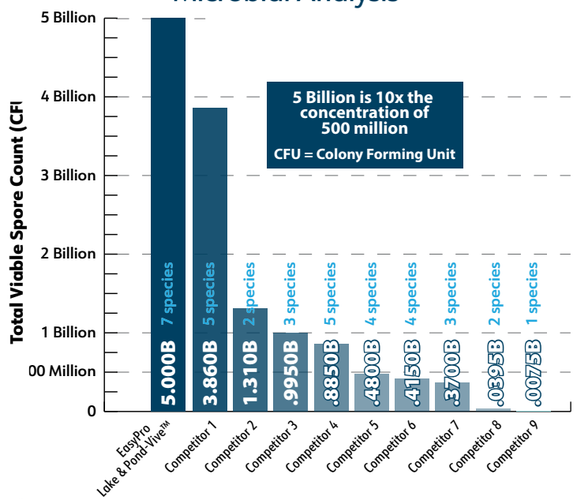
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thinner sections, and a series of terraced waterfalls falling into the pond area."

Proposals are sent by email or snail mail. We will also print the proposal and meet with the client at their kitchen table or at our retail showroom. There is no right or wrong — most of the time, it happens organically.

> ***Pro Tip:*** *Send a dream book or idea book with a handwritten note a few days ahead of the proposal meeting. This helps prepare the client and improves decision-making.*

Partnering With Landscape Professionals

Strong partnerships between pond contractors and landscape designers are common across the industry. We have spent decades developing relationships with landscape professionals. Many times, the landscape designer or architect has already built a strong relationship with the client and will present the water feature on our behalf using our Dream Book, written proposal and 2D rendering as part of their overall plan.

Sometimes we are involved in the presentation, and sometimes we are not. It is important to leave that decision up to the landscape firm; it's their client. If it is appropriate, I am happy to attend any meeting involving the water feature to answer questions or concerns from the homeowner or landscape team.

In these instances, it is important to recognize that you become a key part of the landscaper's presentation. Clear collaboration leads to smoother presentations and more cohesive outcomes.

Showrooms, Home Shows and Pond Tours

One universal truth in the pond world: When people see it, they want it.

The display pond is one of the best sales tools in our industry. People must see it, hear it and experience it — the rushing water, the fish, the birds, the frogs. People still have so much to learn about water features, and we need to show them what is possible.

Seasoned displays most definitely inspire people to incorporate features into their own landscapes. A well-located display can spark a project — or become the model the client wants installed.

Home shows, pond tours and retail showroom displays can be highly effective in selling a menu of pond projects. The client sees a completed display and can visualize that exact setup in their own landscape. In this way, the project speaks for itself, leading to more inspiration and sales.

Present the Dream With Passion

I like in-person presentations because I want the client to feed off my energy and excitement for their project. They can sense my confidence and vision, and this can be very powerful.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen contractors show little enthusiasm during a presentation and how much opportunity they lose by doing so.

Once, I was standing with a client between their garage and home in a courtyard, discussing where to place the water feature. I started clapping and snapping my fingers: "Listen to the acoustics in this exact spot. It's amazing — like an amphitheater! This spot will intensify the sound of the waterfall."

As a former musician, I could hear the acoustics. The homeowner turned out to be a musician as well, and that moment sealed the deal. It also deepened our connection and music became a new talking point.

People can read your energy. People can read your passion (or lack thereof) for their project. Make sure you create an experience to remember. Give them a presentation worthy of framing on their wall.

If you achieve this, "Presenting the Dream" won't be difficult at all. It will be natural and one of the most rewarding parts of the craft.

> ***Pro Tip:*** *You are representing yourself and our industry. Be genuine. Be honest. Be excited. Wishing you much success!*



Home show displays can really show a potential client what can be possible in their own backyard. They can add credibility and confidence throughout the design process.

About the Author



Dean Pipito, owner of Aquatica, has been in the pond industry for over 30 years. Dean and his staff have built and pioneered one of the largest pond and waterscape firms in the country over the last two and a half decades. Aquatica continues to appear in Aquascape's top 5 overall businesses since 2001 and is a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor since 2002. Dean has been featured in newspapers , magazines, and appears as a regular guest on local radio and tv every year. Aquatica has been recognized with many state awards and national recognition over the years. Dean is a former president and long time board member of the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association and former president and long time board member of the Wildlife In Need Center of Wisconsin. Dean and his wife Angela also run a large rental investment company and enjoy their hobby farm and family when not working with pond clients.

Bonsai & Koi

A Perfect Partnership for Pond Enthusiasts

by Cooper Sallade,
Aqua Fauna Ponds

Picture this: a small backyard centered around a beautiful koi pond where colorful, charismatic fish attract the eye like a framed painting come to life. The space is wrapped in undulating garden beds detailed with mountain stones, soft moss, ferns and blooming azaleas. Resting on pedestals throughout the landscape are tiny trees — bonsai — that express a grace and ancient age far greater than the garden or home itself. This subtle yet impactful addition of bonsai trees brings an elegance to the space and contrasts the power and motion of the koi pond with the statuesque living beauty and calmness of the trees.

What Is Bonsai?

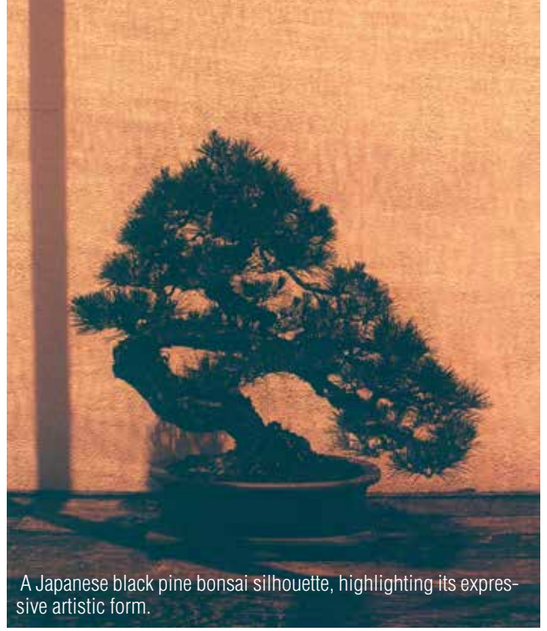
Bonsai, meaning "tree planted in a small container" in the original Japanese, is a global art practice shaped by regional and cultural influences, yet unified by a single purpose: cultivating trees that convey profound age, character and natural beauty while growing in small vessels. These miniature trees represent nature in its distilled form, influenced both by the inherent qualities of the species and the artistic vision of the person who shapes and maintains them. Hundreds of tree and shrub species can be used for bonsai, and the vessels they are planted in — ceramic pots, carved stones or hollowed wood — are often as expressive and unique as the trees themselves.

Koi and Bonsai: The Perfect Complement

For those who already keep koi and water gardens, bonsai is the perfect complement. Anyone who has traveled to Japan and visited a traditional Japanese garden immediately sees how these two pursuits grow from the same cultural and aesthetic vein. Both koi and bonsai are often described as living art, and that connection becomes unmistakable when you consider the effort, time and devotion poured into creating and maintaining these living jewels.

Just as buying a 1-year-old koi requires many years of dedicated rearing before it reaches its full potential, bonsai is a pursuit that is never truly finished. Both practices evolve slowly and reward consistent care. Success with koi and success with bonsai are directly correlated to the energy, patience and time invested. They are long-term hobbies — lifelong in many cases — that hold the keeper actively engaged through daily tasks, seasonal cycles and a vision for a bright future. Together, they cultivate not just a garden, but a meaningful and enduring relationship with living things — a space that can inspire the mind and soothe the soul.


A pond grown bald cypress after 30+ years of training as a bonsai.


A Japanese black pine bonsai silhouette, highlighting its expressive artistic form.

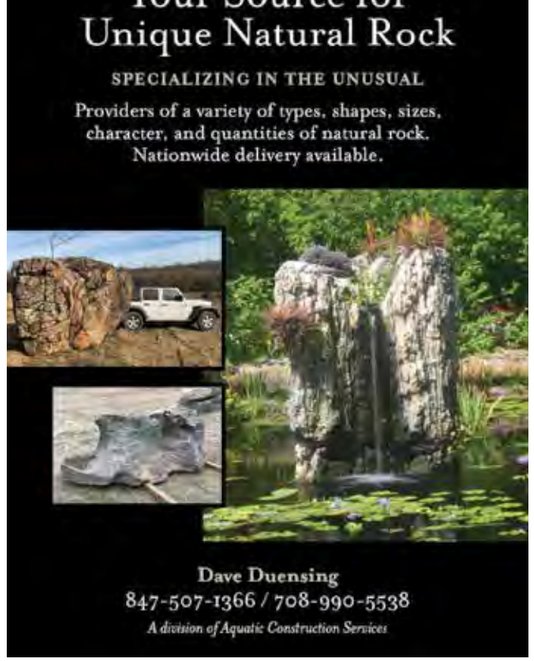
How Bonsai Can Impact a Pond Company

As a pond business, some knowledge and incorporation of bonsai and Japanese gardens can elevate your business and set you apart from typical landscapers and pond installers. Additional sales and room for upgrades is a business model that can be fruitful year after year. Bonsai, just as koi, is a hobby that is addictive, and upscaling collections, both in quality and infrastructure, is common.

We view an installation of a pond or garden as just the beginning of a long and rewarding relationship, both for the client and the business. We have found that many clients who are interested in koi ponds, or who are already koi keepers, are very excited about bringing in additional elements of Japanese garden culture. Installing these elements — such as landscaping boulders, Japanese-inspired plantings, hand-washing basins (read up on "tsukubai"), bonsai and pedestals (monkey poles or stones) — are easy one-day projects

A bonsai garden in Kyoto, Japan. Stones and mosses subtly highlight the tree on a pedestal of stone.





most pond companies already have the skill and equipment to handle.

These specialized projects are in demand, fun to install and can be very profitable. Often these projects are revolving, with the client consistently looking toward the next upgrade or next tree to acquire for their collection. This leaves much room for repeat, high-margin business that is a lower time commitment than traditional pond installs. These installs can be a good additional source of revenue for an already existing pond business and a way to pad out a schedule with small, easy-to-handle projects.

Hurdles of Bonsai

Bonsai is unique because it is highly accessible, and almost anyone can begin the hobby. Yet mastering it at a high level requires years of dedicated practice. Developing the skills to shape beautiful trees and manage the horticultural demands of plant care takes time and experience. This is why entering bonsai as a business can be challenging without the right team or a solid foundation of expertise.

Being prepared for plant care issues and supporting hobbyists with questions and task management regarding continual bonsai care can make or break the experience for a client. Losing a valuable tree due to an unknown disease or having a bonsai grow out of shape and turn into a bush are common problems with new bonsai keepers. These issues are bonsai-specific and, without an expert in the field, can be hard to understand and manage.

Partnerships Form Success

Though bonsai is an incredibly rewarding hobby, it is very difficult to learn alone. For a business without a dedicated and experienced bonsai professional, the challenges that arise from bonsai care can become frustrating and expensive. Forming partnerships allows a business to incorporate bonsai without sacrificing its core focus.

Bonsai professionals are an excellent resource for workshops and one-on-one sessions. Across the country, there is a network of highly skilled bonsai experts — many of whom have studied in Japan — who travel to maintain client trees and teach essential skills. For a pond company, bringing in a bonsai professional for a workshop or demonstration gives clients the opportunity to ask questions and build knowledge under the guidance of an industry expert. This supports clients with complementary needs while allowing the pond company to stay focused on pond and garden design, and it opens the door to expanding construction services with bonsai-specific features and additional upsell opportunities.

Many metropolitan areas are in close proximity to regional bonsai clubs. These clubs are a great resource for connecting with other hobbyists and learning from those with more experience. As a business, offering to host meetings or supporting your local club in other ways can intro-



A flowering satsuki azalea bonsai sitting pondside.

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A Japanese tsukubai water feature is a perfect addition to a property with bonsai and water gardens.

duce you to both prospective and existing clients. Clubs can help guide customers through the horticulture and artistry of bonsai while you support the community around the hobby. Most bonsai clients are either already pond enthusiasts or considering becoming one, leaving opportunity for future multifaceted business.

Selling Bonsai Goods

For companies already selling and growing aquatic plants, or pond retail stores, bonsai and bonsai supplies can be a valuable product line. Selling bonsai pots, soils, bonsai tools and even bonsai trees can be profitable products not readily available for most local buyers. This can bring in new clientele that often will purchase existing pond products and aquatic plants.

The Perfect Tree for Your Pond

A favorite North American species for bonsai is one perfectly suited to live in a koi pond: the bald cypress, (*Taxodium distichum*). This tree is the ideal first-time tree for a pond enthusiast looking to test the waters of bonsai. Bald cypress are also incredibly easy to care for, both in a garden and commercially. This aquatic species can live with its root-ball totally submerged in water just as any emergent aquatic plant, allowing for effortless watering. They can handle frequent root and branch pruning, thrive in small container sizes and grow with all the vigor of a typical aquatic plant.

In aquatic environments, they put up aerial roots called "knees" and grow into beautiful forms. Kept in a container in a pond and pulled yearly for maintenance, they are the perfect pond bonsai.

We like to keep a stash of these wonderful trees for placing in completed pond builds. With a small bit of instruction, we can train the pond keeper in basic care and pruning. This style of care compacts the tree, effectively making the beginnings of bonsai in a koi pond. These trees are so charming and engaging, this one act can often lead a pond enthusiast to the new hobby of bonsai.

Give Bonsai a Try

Bonsai and koi ponds are meant to be together. Both are living and aesthetic pursuits that lead to the same goal — creating a space surrounded by the joys of nature while bringing the human aspect of art to an outdoor space. Incorporation of bonsai and Japanese garden design can broaden the scope of existing projects and bring new clients who value both ponds and the deep artistic traditions that enhance them.

About the Author



Cooper Sallade began working with ponds and water gardens in 2008 as a high school student in Richmond, VA, cleaning ponds during the summer. His early interest quickly grew into a passion, leading him to design and build ponds throughout college for both personal and client projects. That passion eventually evolved into a career. Cooper founded Aqua Fauna Inc., a full-service construction and maintenance company specializing in water features, and merged with Fin and Feather – The Water Garden Center, a pond specific retail store. Today, his business encompasses custom water feature construction, pond maintenance, retail sales, and koi sourcing trips to Japan. With a commitment to craftsmanship and quality, Cooper continues to share his love for water gardening with clients and enthusiasts across the region.

RECAP of the Midsouth Pond Retreat





by Bubba Hogan,
Mid-South Ponds

In November, pond professionals from across the country gathered just outside of Memphis, Tennessee, for the Midsouth Pond Retreat—an immersive, business-focused event designed to strengthen leadership, sharpen strategy, and foster meaningful industry connections.

The retreat welcomed 72 attendees representing 15 states, with participants traveling from California to South Carolina, Maine to Texas, underscoring the national reach and growing momentum of the pond and water feature industry. More than a meeting, the retreat served as a collaborative space for contractors, business owners, and industry professionals to step away from day-to-day operations and focus on long-term growth.

Industry Support Makes It Possible

The success of the Midsouth Pond Retreat was made possible through the generous support of industry partners committed to education and professional development. Sponsors included: EasyPro, Link Master, Aquascape, Apex Distribution, Anjon Manufacturing, Pond Guard Liner Manufacturing and Bubba Hogan Coaching.

Their continued investment in the industry helped create an environment focused on learning, connection, and actionable outcomes.

Coaching, Strategy, and Perspective

A core component of the retreat was its high-impact coaching sessions, led by respected industry voices and business strategists including Bob Turner, Summit Coaching and the Rozenberg Group, Steve Rozenberg, and Bubba Hogan of Bubba Hogan Coaching.

These sessions focused on leadership development, business clarity, and navigating the evolving challenges facing contractors today.

The retreat also featured guest speakers Jacob Salem, owner of EZ Metrics Marketing, and Tim Cutroni of New England Aquatic Landscaping. Their presentations delivered practical insight into marketing performance, operational growth, and adapting to market shifts—providing attendees with tools they can implement immediately.

A Shared Table, A Shared Experience

Beyond the classroom, the retreat emphasized connection. Attendees enjoyed chef-inspired meals that rivaled Food Network fare, creating a relaxed, communal atmosphere where conversations flowed naturally. Shared meals became opportunities to exchange ideas, stories, and hard-earned lessons from the field.

Building Relationships That Last

Networking proved to be one of the most valuable elements of the retreat. Contractors and business owners connected with peers who understand the unique challenges of the pond industry, forming relationships that extend far beyond the event itself. These conversations laid the groundwork for future collaboration, mentorship, and mutual support.

Looking Ahead to 2026

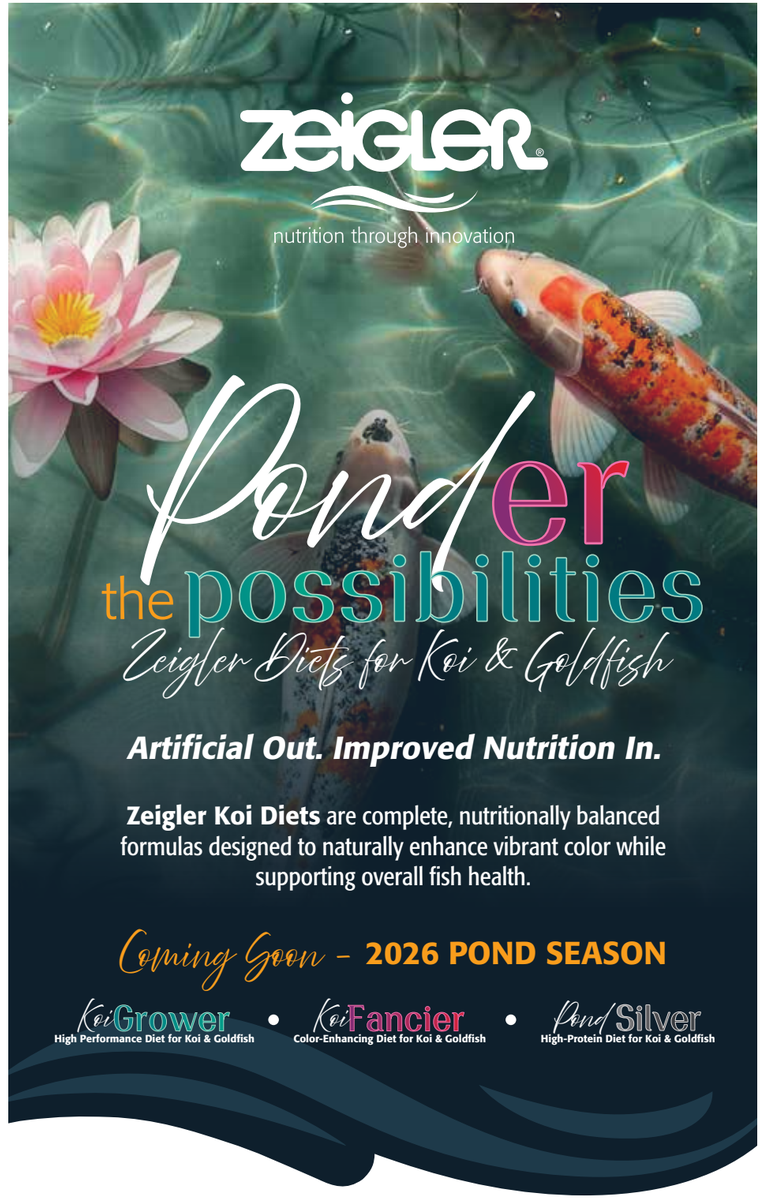
As the retreat concluded, every participant left with a written action plan focused on addressing challenges and seizing opportunities in 2026. Armed with clarity, accountability, and renewed motivation, attendees returned home prepared to elevate their businesses and lead with intention.

The Midsouth Pond Retreat was more than a successful event—it was a reminder of the power of community, shared knowledge, and purposeful leadership. The impact of this gathering will be seen not only in individual businesses, but across the industry as a whole.

About the Author

Bubba Hogan is a retired deputy sheriff, serial entrepreneur, speaker, business coach and owner of Midsouth Ponds, which was named Aquascape Inc.'s Top Frog No. 1 Contractor in the world.





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Fall Harvest on an American Koi Farm


The 350' harvest net stretches across the water as the remaining line unwinds from the truck's spool - fall harvest in motion.

by Ellen Kloubec,
Kloubec Koi Farm

There's a special kind of excitement in the air when the first crisp mornings arrive in Iowa. The leaves turn, the ponds settle, and at Kloubec Koi Farm that can only mean one thing - it's harvest time! While others mark their calendars by spring, summer, autumn, and winter, we measure ours by koi rituals: spawning season and harvest season. Everything in between; every feeding, every water change, every shimmering glimpse of growth, leads to this moment.

For our family-run American koi farm, fall harvest is the culmination of months of care, patience, and anticipation. It's when we finally see the results of a summer's growth beneath the surface of our mud ponds, top-quality koi in every size, color, and variety that koi enthusiasts across the country have come to expect from Kloubec.


The Kloubed Koi Farm, Amana, Iowa, 80 acres of earthen mud-ponds.

A Season Measured in Koi

The story of harvest really begins months earlier, back in the spring, when our hatchery awakens from its winter rest. The hatchery building is disinfected top to bottom, every system cleaned and checked, and all equipment put back into service for the sole purpose for which it was designed: breeding koi fish. Outdoors, some of our earthen ponds are tilled, renovated, fertilized, and filled with pristine water. They're designated as nursery ponds for the season, ready to receive newly hatched fry.

Spring also brings the excitement of selecting breeding pairs. Each year, we rotate through our high-quality Japanese bloodline and domesticated adult broodstock koi to ensure as many varieties as possible are represented in both traditional-fin koi and Butterfly koi. These breeding decisions shape the year's harvest long before a single net hits the water.

The Countdown to Harvest

By late summer, the countdown to harvest begins. The koi have spent months feeding on our Platinum Koi Cuisine and natural plankton, developing deep color and luster. Koi in the nursery ponds have been sampled periodically to monitor growth and development. When water temperatures drop and daylight shortens, the koi metabolism slows. These are nature's signals that harvest time is near.

Preparation is key. Harvest nets are inspected, transport tanks disinfected, and aerators tested. It's a careful orchestration of timing and teamwork, and if we're honest, a little friendly competition among ponds. Everyone secretly hopes their favorite batch will produce this year's standout koi.

The Mud Pond Reveal

Draining the ponds is the first step of fall harvest. Some ponds are seined while completely full, while others require the water level to be lowered. As the waterline recedes, flashes of red, white, yellow, black, and blue begin to stir beneath the surface. High-quality koi, developed over the summer, appear like living jewels. Some ponds yield bold Gosanke (Kohaku, Sanke, or Showa), while others produce beautiful Hikari types. In other ponds, incredibly rare and unique varieties are unveiled. Graceful, radiant Butterfly koi seem to dance in the shallow water.

As the seine net draws closer and the fish are confined, the once clear water turns murky with their frantic movement. Excitement grows as the overwhelming volume and vivid colors of the koi emerge through the clouded water.

"Not every koi is brought indoors after harvest. Some of our ponds remain stocked and koi overwinter naturally under steady aeration and close observation. These ponds allow certain groups to continue their development in a natural setting while maintaining strong health and resilience for the next growing season."


A cool and crisp picture-perfect morning for fall harvest at Kloubec Koi Farm.


Fall harvest of two-year-olds; and the expression says it all: WOW!

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No matter how many years we've done this, there's always a sense of wonder in that first glimpse during fall harvest. You can plan the genetics, manage the feed, and control the environment - but nature always surprises you. Each koi tells a story of growth and transformation, shaped by the Iowa mud and the changing seasons.

Teamwork in the Trenches

Harvest day at a koi farm starts before sunrise and often ends well after sunset. Boots splash through cool water as the team forms a line to pull the seine net. It takes coordination, communication, and endurance. Numerous people might be working the same pond; hauling nets, dipping koi, and operating the harvest crane that transports fish to one of our indoor koi buildings.

And of course, there's always a little humor involved. Someone inevitably ends up stuck knee-deep in mud, and several koi always make a daring escape. The laughter keeps the team energized, even as the work intensifies. The fall harvest spans many days, even weeks, and is a labor intensive, hands-on process that celebrates what koi farming is all about: patience, passion, and pride in every catch.



Myron lifts a netful of koi to the surface of a mud pond. It's a dramatic moment when the beauty of fall harvest is revealed and months of hard work finally show their reward.



Harvesting the Hikari Muji mud pond, traditional and Butterfly Yamabuki and Orenji Ogon.



Sorting and grading freshly harvested koi. Such a fun part of fall harvest, when all the hard work is right there in front of us.

Sorting, Grading, and the Art of the Eye

Once the koi are safely netted and transferred indoors to one of our koi buildings, the real artistry begins. Sorting and grading require a trained eye and years of experience. Each fish is evaluated for body conformation, skin quality, color depth, and pattern. Young koi are grouped by size and variety. Some exceptional koi are set aside and pampered while they continue to grow and develop to their full potential.

This step blends science and intuition. Two koi from the same spawn can develop in completely different ways, depending on environment and diet. Recognizing potential takes both knowledge and instinct, shaped by 44 years of owning and operating our American koi farm.

Stories from the Ponds

Every harvest comes with its share of memorable moments. One year, a koi that had gone unseen all summer resurfaced, it had doubled its spring size and was twice as stunning. Occasionally, onlookers watch wide-eyed as hundreds of koi gleam in the sunlight during harvest. These moments remind us why we love this work.

There's also the occasional surprise emerging from a pond where we least expect it, a perfectly patterned Showa or a beautiful Butterfly koi that seems to pose for every photo. This keeps us humble, inspired, and eager for next year.

The Final Haul

Once the koi are moved into temperature controlled systems indoors, they'll spend the colder months under careful supervision as we prepare them for the next pond season. Feeding routines and water quality are monitored closely, because their health remains our top priority.

In addition to the baby koi harvest, we also seine ponds dedicated to growing select koi to larger sizes. While the fall harvest is our biggest seasonal event, we conduct additional harvests year-round in both our outdoor ponds and expansive indoor facilities. With over 300,000 gallons of indoor grow-out space and 60 outdoor mud ponds, Kloubec Koi Farm maintains one of the largest and most diverse koi inventories in the country, ensuring healthy, beautiful koi are available for shipment all year long.

By the end, the team is tired but satisfied. There's a deep sense of accomplishment in seeing the results of an entire season's work; hundreds of thousands of beautiful koi, each one reflecting dedication, skill, and the trust shared between farmer and customer.

Koi Health After the Harvest

Once the fall harvest is complete, the focus shifts immediately to koi health and post-harvest care. At Kloubec Koi Farm, this stage is just as important as the harvest itself. Every koi moved indoors undergoes careful observation, routine health screening, and ongoing monitoring to ensure they transition smoothly from the mud ponds into our temperature-controlled systems.

All Kloubec koi are certified KHV-free through USDA APHIS health certification, and we take that responsibility seriously. Because every fish we sell is born and raised right here on our Amana, Iowa farm—with no outside

COMMITTED TO KOI HEALTH

At Kloubec Koi Farm, koi health is paramount. After harvest, every koi undergoes close observation and health screening. All Kloubec koi are certified KHV-free by USDA APHIS health certification. We take that responsibility seriously. All koi sold at Kloubec Koi Farm are born and raised right here on our Amana, Iowa farm. We do not sell koi sourced from other producers, ensuring that every koi leaving our farm is as healthy as it is beautiful.

Our devotion to koi health and quality allows us to confidently supply wholesale customers, pond installers, retailers, and koi enthusiasts nationwide with healthy, vibrant koi year-round. To further support industry partners, we also maintain detailed online koi listings featuring clear photos and real-time availability. This accurate, what-you-see-is-what-you-get inventory is a tool to help pond professionals plan and select healthy, American-raised koi with confidence.

Whether you're stocking a backyard pond, enhancing a retail display, or planning a special project, our fish arrive ready to thrive.



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A beautiful mix of Butterfly and traditional-fin koi fresh from the mud ponds. Offering a look at the quality and variety available for order fulfillment.

koi brought into our inventory—we maintain complete oversight of each koi's health, lineage, and environment from the moment it hatches.

This commitment allows us to confidently supply pond installers, retailers, and koi enthusiasts with vibrant, healthy koi year-round. To make selection easy for our industry partners, we maintain detailed online listings with clear photos and real-time availability, offering a true what-you-see-is-what-you-get buying experience.

Whether you're stocking a backyard pond, filling retail tanks, or sourcing koi for a special project, our fish arrive conditioned, carefully screened, and ready to thrive.

Reflection: Why We Do It

Fall harvest is more than a task on the calendar, it's a celebration of everything that makes koi farming so rewarding. Yet for us, the work never truly pauses. Our indoor grow-out systems and overwintering ponds keep the rhythm of koi farming going all year long, 24/7. Each harvest connects the science of breeding koi with the joy of discovery. It's the payoff for those early mornings and long days, and the beginning of the next cycle.

At Kloubec Koi Farm, we're proud to share this tradition, and our koi, with pond professionals and hobbyists across the country.

At last, the nets are hung and the ponds freeze over, but a glow of pride still lingers. Because at the end of every harvest, we're reminded that we're not just raising fish, we're cultivating living art, color, and joy for koi lovers everywhere.

About Kloubec Koi Farm

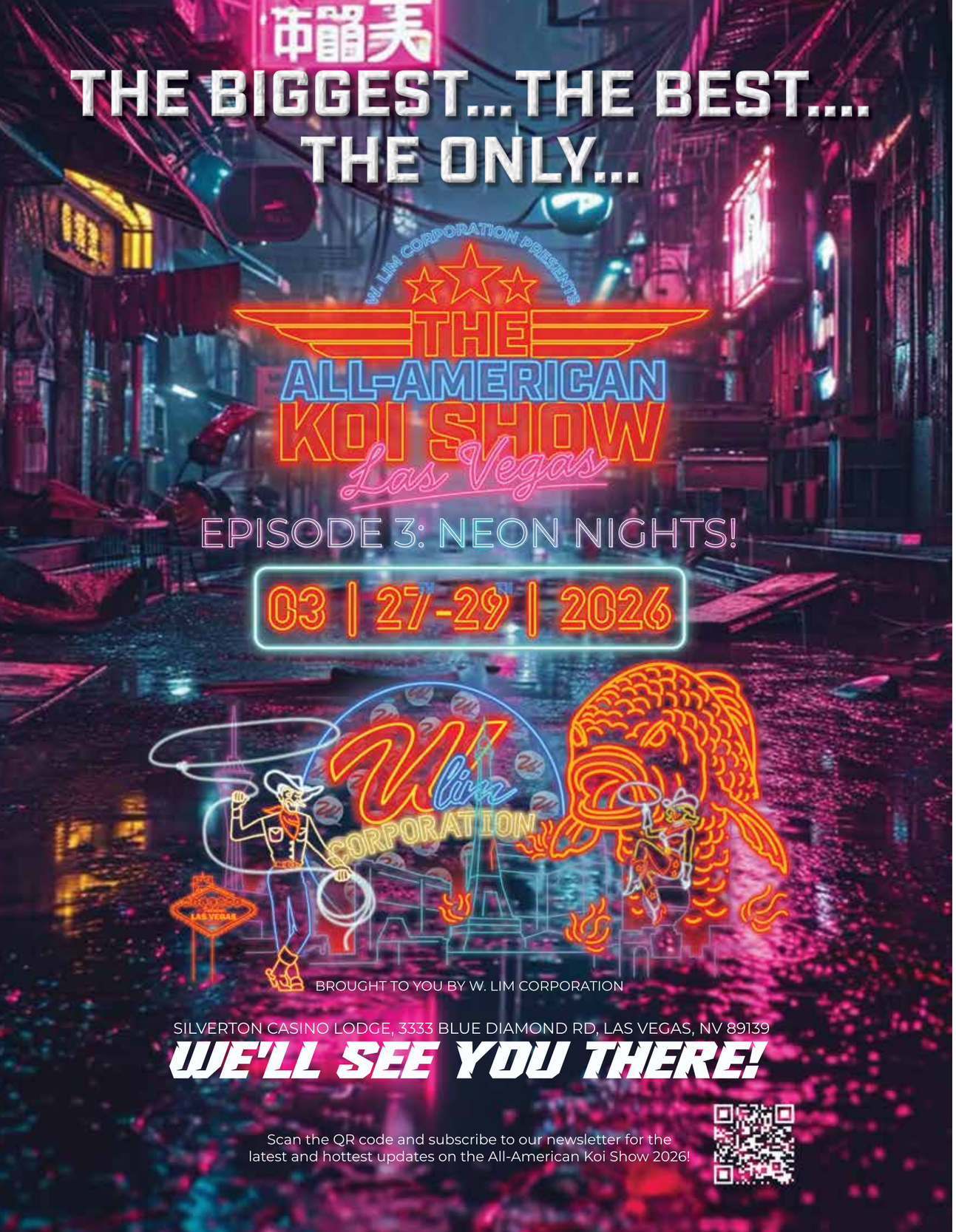
Located in Amana, Iowa, Kloubec Koi Farm is one of America's largest and most trusted producers of high-quality koi and Butterfly koi. Family-owned and operated since 1981, the farm maintains USDA APHIS certification and is proud to offer koi that are 100 percent KHV-free. The farm does not sell any koi sourced from other producers, ensuring that every koi leaving the farm is as healthy as it is beautiful. With both seasonal and year-round harvests, Kloubec supplies healthy, vibrant koi to pond professionals, retailers, and hobbyists nationwide, every month of the year.

"Rest assured that our koi are raised with care, passion, and pride."

About the Author



Ellen Kloubec and her husband, Myron, began their aquaculture business in 1981, and their farm consists of 80-acres of mud-ponds. Together with their son, Nick, they raise and supply healthy & hardy koi to wholesale customers throughout the USA and Canada. Ellen loves all things koi. She enjoys Koi Shows & Watergarden Tradeshows where she has built lasting friendships. Many hobbyists and celebrities have relied on Ellen when looking for the perfect koi. Ellen hand-selected the Kloubec breeder fish while in Japan. The koi spawning season is her favorite time of year when the breeders are indoors in the hatchery. "Experimenting with different pairings is a passion. It's so rewarding to harvest beautiful little koi and see your vision come to life." Additionally, Ellen enjoys being with her family and their dogs, you'll even find pictures of them on the Kloubec website!





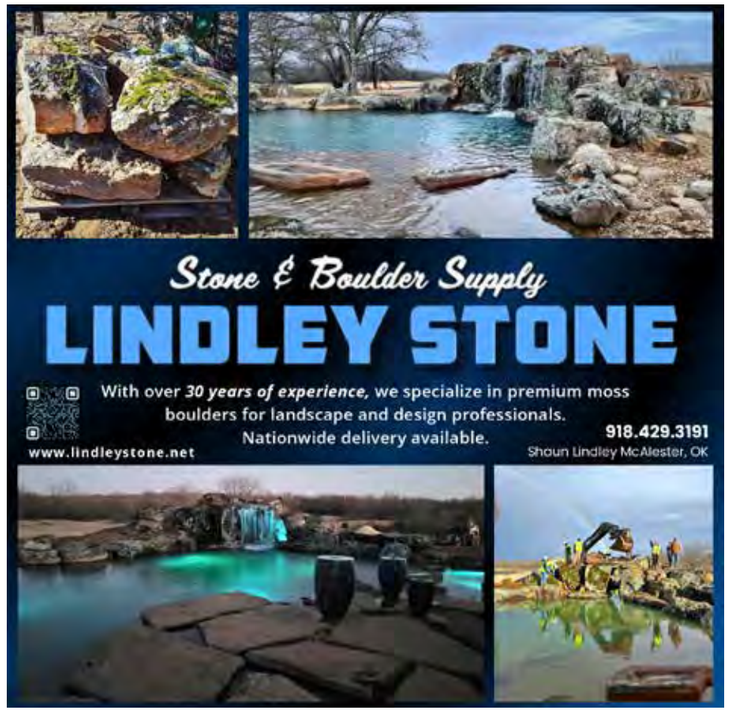
Lessons in Longevity

Retail Insights from Connie's Pond and Koi

by Hank DeWaal III,
Connie's Pond and Koi

When people ask how long I've been in the pond and koi business, I usually have to start way back in 1964. That's when Connie's Tropical Fish first opened. Connie was my grandfather's brother's wife, and though I never met her, she had quite a reputation for running a gem of a little shop.

My grandparents came over from the Netherlands in 1965 and bought the store in Oakland, right on Foothill and 38th. They built it up through the 1970s and into the 1980s, and when they retired, my dad took over. I grew up in that shop. By the time I was 16, I was working there every day, learning the ropes, and managing with my dad through the '80s and '90s.





From Oakland to Castro Valley

In 1997, we opened a second location in Castro Valley of Connie's Tropical Fish. In the next year and a half we opened up Connie's Pond and Garden, which was our dedicated pond and koi section. Eventually we sold the Oakland store around the year 2001. For a while after that we ran both the aquarium shop and pond shop, but by 2016, we decided to phase out the aquarium side completely and focus entirely on ponds.

That was the birth of Connie's Pond and Koi. We transformed the front section of the Castro Valley building into a full retail pond shop and used the back area for livestock—lotus, lilies, koi, fancy goldfish, and more. Today, we carry everything from Japanese koi to pumps, filters, and pond supplies, all under one roof.



Growing with the Industry

When I think back to the early days, koi were always around, but they weren't the focus. It wasn't until the late '90s, when we expanded the Castro Valley shop, that koi really started becoming a core part of the business. Over the past 25 years, koi, pond plants and pond equipment have gone from being side items to our main identity.



Like any retail business, we've had to adapt. When my dad was running things, he hired web guys to build our first site, but the cost didn't match the results. Around 10 years ago, I took over and built the website myself. Platforms like Squarespace made it simple, and suddenly we had an online storefront that looked great and worked. That shift into e-commerce opened new doors, but honestly, nothing beats helping a customer face-to-face in the shop.

Lessons from Retail Longevity

People often ask me what's made us successful for so long. The truth is, there's no single secret. It's all of it—the word of mouth, the networking, the website, the social media, the sales. But the biggest impact always comes from how you treat the customer.

No digital ad or promotion will close the deal if you can't help someone the moment they walk through your door. Whether they need a tiny part or a full pond setup, it's about listening, educating, and making sure they leave with confidence. That's what creates steady growth year after year.

Running a family business also teaches you balance. For me, it's never been about being the biggest hobbyist. I don't need a pond full of koi at home to prove my passion. I get to enjoy selling them, and then I get to watch other people fall in love with the fish and the lifestyle. That's rewarding enough.

Advice for New Retailers

If someone's thinking about opening a pond or aquarium shop today, I'd tell them this: know your business model before you start. Are you catering to DIY pond owners? Contractors? Both? Your focus determines your inventory, your marketing, and your relationships.

And remember—it's not one thing that makes a business work. It's consistency. Do all the small things: build a website, network with local groups, set up sales events, and most importantly, learn how to sell. You can advertise all day long, but if you don't know how to close the deal when someone calls or walks in, you won't last.

There is an art to business. If you don't love or have a passion for the art of business, the art of business will suck the passion out of what you love.

Moving Forward

We've tried a lot of things—monthly sales with vendors, promotions, experimenting with how far in advance to advertise. Some things work better than others. That's retail. But after more than 60 years, what matters most hasn't changed: being present, being reliable, and being passionate about serving the customer.

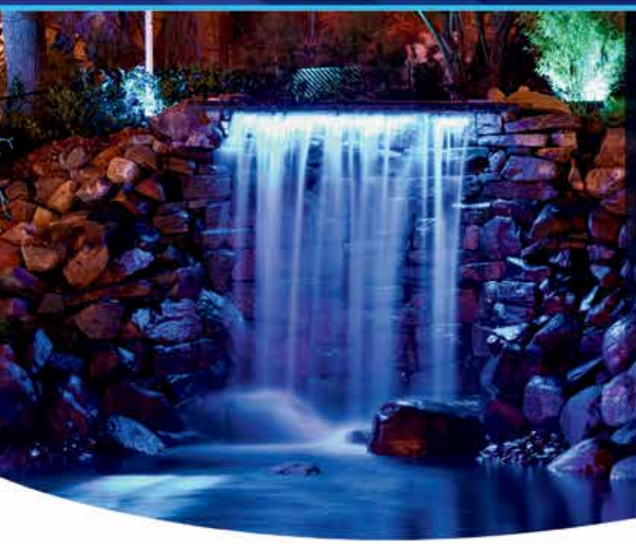
At the end of the day, that's what keeps Connie's Pond and Koi alive—and what I hope continues for the next generation.

About the Author



Hank DeWaal III is a third generation owner of Connie's Pond and Koi, a family business that traces its roots back to 1964, when his grandparents first took over the original Connie's Tropical Fish shop in Oakland. Growing up in the store and managing it alongside his father since his early teens, Hank has spent his entire life immersed in the freshwater, saltwater, bird, and reptile retail sales and now the pond and koi retail industry. After expanding into Castro Valley and eventually transitioning fully to ponds and koi in 2016, he transformed the business into a thriving destination for Japanese koi, pond plants, equipment, and expert guidance. Known for his hands-on approach and commitment to customer service, Hank continues to lead Connie's Pond and Koi with the same passion his family started with, while adapting to modern retail and inspiring the next generation of pond enthusiasts.

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BEYOND THE SHOVEL

An Honest Guide to the Work Behind the Water for Aspiring Pond Pros

by Mike Gannon,
That Pond Place

I just want to build ponds. That's all I want to do.
Cool.

This is a statement many newcomers to the pond world make — a pure, honest goal that captures the heart of this trade. But anyone who's been around long enough knows that building ponds is never just about digging holes and filling them with water.

Many pond professionals take pride in being experts, masters of their craft. Specializing carries a certain polish, a badge of credibility that sets you apart. To be an expert means you're called in to solve problems few others can handle. Some



specialties are narrower than others, but make no mistake, being a pond specialist is about as specialized as it gets.

However, the idea of being a pond "specialist" is a bit of an illusion — a trick of the trade, even a bamboozle. Because to become truly specialized in ponds, you actually have to master a wide range of skills, and at least be familiar with dozens more. When you dive into all things aquatic, you'll quickly find yourself far beyond any one-dimensional skill set. In the pond world, the true specialist is a generalist, a real all-rounder.

The Living Layer

The first drop in the bucket for any pond specialist begins with life itself including koi, goldfish, and aquatic plants. All are selectively bred, human-influenced versions of what nature started with. None of them exist in their ornamental form in the wild, and each requires unique care, diets, and seasonal adjustments.

To build great ponds, you must understand the living creatures that inhabit them. Knowledge of koi and goldfish behavior, nutrition, and water chemistry will serve you daily. These topics are deep enough to study for a lifetime, and the sooner you develop a working understanding, the better off your ponds and your clients will be.

Aquatic plants are a whole other world. Even in major gardening circles, they're often overlooked or misunderstood. Yet they're vital to healthy water systems. Outside the pond industry, you'd struggle to find anyone who wants to talk about koi, goldfish, or hardy lilies — it's simply too niche. But as a pond specialist, you'd better be able to talk the talk.

Understanding Ecosystems

Even the most decorative pond becomes part of a living ecosystem. You'll quickly learn that the moment water meets earth, nature moves in. Frogs, birds, turtles, salamanders, even snakes and crayfish will find your ponds.

Understanding these relationships is essential. Awareness of local predators like herons or mink will help you design with protection in mind. Building ponds means working with nature, not against it, and successful specialists know how to maintain that balance.

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Building the Basin

Now comes the part most new pond builders think they signed up for — construction. Sure, anyone can dig a hole and install a liner, but true pond design goes far deeper.

You'll need to understand excavation, grading, and erosion control. You'll operate hand tools, power tools, and eventually heavy equipment. You'll learn quickly that water flow is a force of nature, not a suggestion. One major rainstorm can teach you more about civil engineering than any book.

With each build, you'll also pick up skills in surveying, drainage management, and soil compaction. Then there's everything else that comes with working on a job site: project flow, safety, insurance, permits, and even neighborhood relations. Learning how to communicate with homeowners, curious onlookers, and inspectors respectfully is an underrated but essential part of this profession.

Designing Water

Pond design is a wave that's constantly evolving. It requires both artistic instinct and technical understanding. You'll study stone — literally. Petrology, rock placement, and structural stability all matter. You'll learn how to move and strap boulders safely, and how to use them for both function and beauty.



Then comes the equipment. You'll need to understand pumps, plumbing, aeration, UV systems, ionizers, de-icers, and all the fittings that make a system work. You'll calculate flow rates, head pressure, and friction loss more times than you can count. And if you think pond lighting is just for looks, wait until you're troubleshooting submerged electrical systems.

This is where the fun begins — blending art, science, and practicality into something living and lasting.

Beyond the Water's Edge

Before you ever lift a shovel, logistics will shape your success. You'll manage materials, coordinate deliveries, and keep track of crews, schedules, and weather. Understanding the pond supply chain, estimating costs, and sequencing tasks are all vital skills.

Once the pond is complete, your education continues beneath the surface. You'll dive into water quality management, microbial balance, algae control, and fish health. You'll discuss pH, ammonia, and micron levels like a scientist — because in this trade, you are one.

And when you're ready to take on your own clients, you'll add some more hats such as marketer and salesperson.

The Business of Building Ponds

To build ponds professionally, you'll need customers and that means learning how to reach them. Marketing, website management, SEO, and social media are all part of the modern pond builder's toolkit.

Closing a sale is an art in itself, one many builders learn the hard way. Then comes the paperwork: bookkeeping, accounting, scheduling, insurance, and customer management systems. It's not the glamorous part of the job, but it's what keeps you in business.

So yes — you'll find yourself spending more time behind a desk than you ever imagined, doing things that are the exact opposite of just "building ponds."

The Real Lesson

Becoming a pond specialist means mastering an incredible variety of disciplines — many that seem unrelated at first. You'll connect geology with biology, business with art, and design with ecology.

The irony of this trade is that to specialize in ponds, you must first learn a little bit of everything else.

Pond specialists aren't just builders. They're artists, scientists, ecologists, and entrepreneurs. They shape landscapes into living ecosystems where water, plants, fish, wildlife, friends, and families coexist.

So, you just want to build ponds?

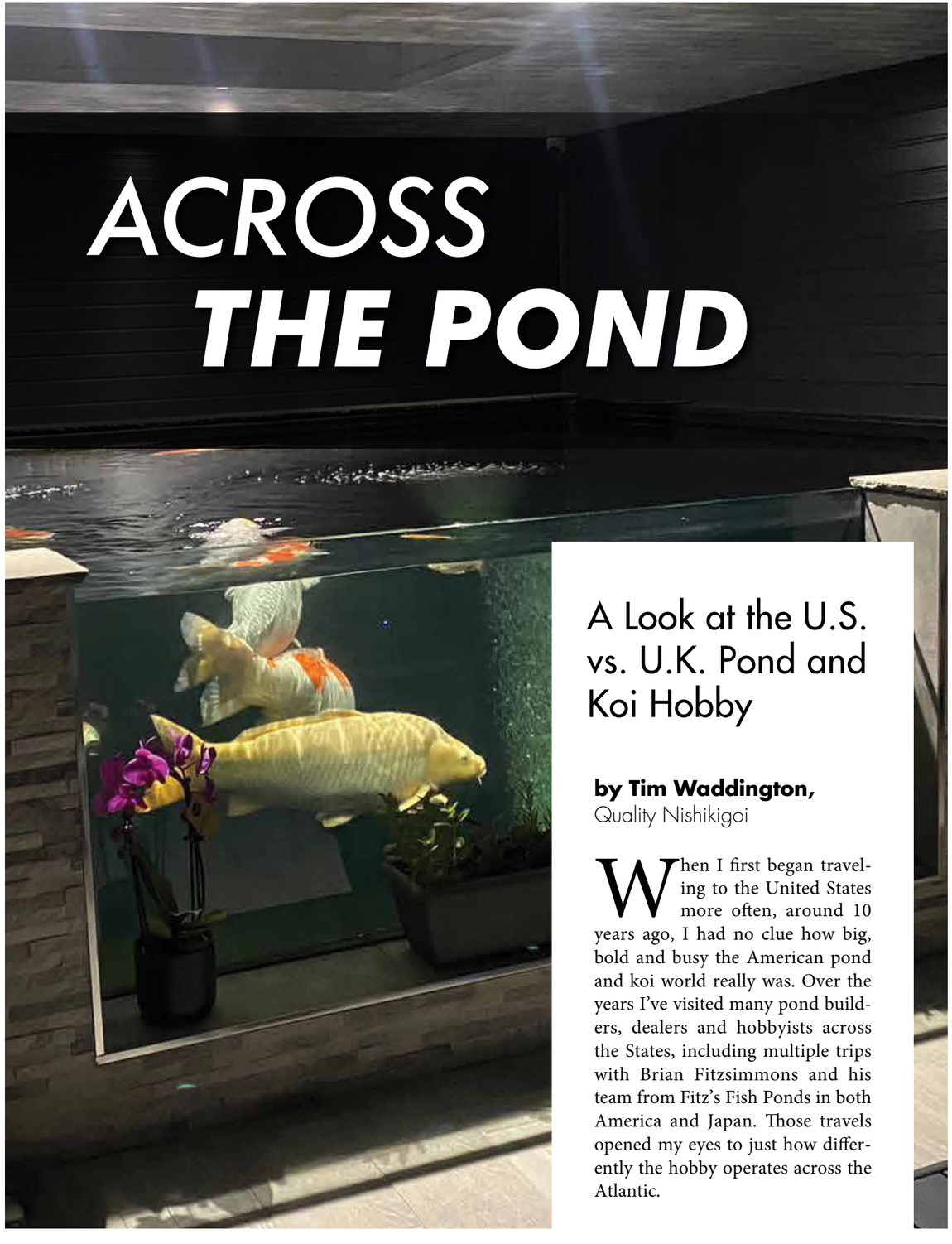
Cool.

Buckle up.

About the Author



Mike Gannon is a life-long fish and plant hobbyist, 30+ year award winning pond professional. Owner of New Jersey based That Pond Place and Full Service Aquatics. Mike has been building and servicing ponds and water features in NJ and around the US, taking his company international in 2021. Mike is host of The Koi Pond Watergarden Podcast, author of Love Your Pond blog, his YouTube channel The Pond Hunter. Always "In the pursuit of all things aquatic".



ACROSS THE POND

A Look at the U.S. vs. U.K. Pond and Koi Hobby

by Tim Waddington,
Quality Nishikigoi

When I first began traveling to the United States more often, around 10 years ago, I had no clue how big, bold and busy the American pond and koi world really was. Over the years I've visited many pond builders, dealers and hobbyists across the States, including multiple trips with Brian Fitzsimmons and his team from Fitz's Fish Ponds in both America and Japan. Those travels opened my eyes to just how differently the hobby operates across the Atlantic.

I've been visiting America for 30 years now and have attended most of the major shows during that time. I've learned a lot from the people I've met — and even more from the way they build, maintain and enjoy their ponds.

Garden Culture and Outdoor Living

It's hard to explain the U.S. versus U.K. difference without experiencing it. One of the biggest luxuries Americans have is simple: space. Garden (or "yard") space can be enormous compared to ours. And the weather allows them to actually use it.

In the U.K., with our legendary rain and gloom, most people get maybe a couple of decent months outdoors. Meanwhile, I've been to clients' homes in America where they grill breakfast, lunch and dinner outside every single day. When you live like that, having a beautiful garden becomes a priority because you can enjoy it nearly year-round.

I've been told more than once, "You're going to see the most amazing ponds you've ever seen." Then I pull up to the front of the property and think, *This house? Really?* But then I walk around the back and it's paradise — huge ponds, lush landscaping, waterfalls, plants thriving everywhere. You can feel the love poured into it.

Space and Access Challenges in the U.K.

Back home, everything feels tighter. Many of the new koi ponds in the U.K. are built in modern housing estates where the houses are close together, and access down the side of the property might be just 24 inches wide. Trying to get a machine into the garden is nearly impossible.

Of course we have ponds where machinery access is fine, but more often than not, it means hand-digging. Soil goes out front in barrows. Skilled builders spend days moving soil before construction even starts. That labor alone drives up cost — which is why many people dig the pond themselves to save money. It makes a massive difference.

Natural Ponds vs. Purpose-Built Koi Ponds

In America, many people build what we'd call Aquascape-style ponds — natural, rock-filled, loads of water movement, waterfalls splashing away. The old argument between the U.K. and U.S. about rocks in ponds will probably never end.

I've never personally had an issue with rocks. Carp love rooting around the bottom. It's natural. And 90% of these ponds run on grid systems, which people in the U.K. would compare to undergravel filtration.

But high-end Japanese koi? Completely different story. Koi don't need an excuse to injure themselves — they're quite talented at it. People who want to grow show koi and bring out full potential focus on exact flow rates, massive filtration, specialized food and very controlled water treatments. Two completely different goals.

Some people want a natural pond and a peaceful garden.


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8,000 gallon full indoor pond.

Others want a koi growth system. Both are valid — and both require different things.

What People Buy — and Why

In the U.K., probably only about 10% of koi keepers have Japanese koi. The rest keep domestic or imported non-Japanese fish. With our space restrictions, many start with small ponds for just a few fish. But then the koi bug sets in and they're calling us about big dedicated koi ponds with high-quality Japanese koi. We see it all the time.

In the U.S., I see something very different. When Americans build a new pond, many want a full collection instantly: Kohaku, Showa, Sanke, Yamabuki, Chagoi, Ochiba — all in one go. Watching U.S. teams buy koi in Japan is fascinating. They're often buying for one client but selecting many varieties.

In the U.K., top koi keepers usually buy one or two fish a year, maybe three. It's a slower, more curated journey.

Maintenance: The Biggest Difference of All

I always knew Americans had a different approach to maintenance, but it wasn't until I spent time with Fitz's Fish Ponds — that I realized how much maintenance contributes to the overall design of their business and many other pond businesses in the industry as well.

At the start of the season, crews go out to open ponds, clean them, check equipment, replace pumps and tidy everything up after winter. At the end of the season, they close everything down again. And during the year, they handle every issue from leaks to electrical failures.

In the U.K., this model exists but on a much smaller scale. Maintenance is growing, but slowly. We do not have companies sending out 10 trucks every morning to service thousands of clients within a two-hour radius. That level of organization and volume is something I still find incredible to witness.

I've stayed at big U.S. pond facilities before. I love waking up early, grabbing a coffee, wandering around the fish houses in total silence. Then around 6:30 a.m. the rumbling starts — trucks rolling in, crews arriving, equipment loading. Thirty minutes later, they've all blasted out again. Organized chaos. Then at 4:30 p.m., the whole process runs in reverse.

Nothing like that exists in the U.K. koi world. Not even close.



12,000 gallon glass pond.

Koi Shows Across the Atlantic

The koi show scene in the United States is still thriving. In summer, there's practically one every weekend somewhere. But the size of the country makes it a logistical nightmare. I've helped pack koi for American clients who drive 20 hours to compete. Some even fly their koi to shows. It still blows my mind.

In the U.K., many shows have closed down. The ones we have are still great events, but it's nothing like the frequency or scale in the U.S.

One Hobby, Many Lifestyles

This is what makes the koi hobby so diverse. You can have a stunning natural pond where someone enjoys the sound of flowing water after work. You can have someone else driving across states or loading koi onto a plane for a show.

Koi can be enjoyed by anyone, at any budget, anywhere in the world. The passion is the same — the lifestyle around it is what changes.

Sometimes the hobby just works a little differently and that's what makes it so fascinating.

About the Author



Tim Waddington is a globally respected koi professional with more than 30 years of experience in sourcing, selecting, and showcasing high-quality Japanese Nishikigoi. He is the owner of Quality Nishikigoi in the UK, where he personally selects koi directly from Japan's top breeders. Having traveled to Japan more than 110 times, Tim has built long-standing relationships in Niigata and Yamakoshi, giving him rare insight into bloodlines, breeder intent, and championship-level koi. He is also the founder of KoiTrips.com, leading guided koi-buying and educational tours that immerse hobbyists in Japan's koi culture, harvests, and shows. Through education, media, and hands-on experience, Tim is widely recognized as a trusted authority and ambassador within the global koi community.



12,000 gallon formal pond.



14,000 gallon in ground pond.



12,000 gallon indoor pond.

















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INSIDE THE 2025 ATLANTIC-OASE PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

by Lauren Nolan,
Publisher, POND Trade Magazine

The 2025 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference once again reminded me why this industry feels more like a family than a field of competitors. Held at the Hilton Cleveland Downtown, this year's event embodied the theme "Built to Rock!" through three unforgettable days of connection, education, and celebration.

From the moment attendees arrived, there was a buzz of anticipation. Contractors, distributors, retailers, manufacturers, and educators converged with a shared mission—learn something new, strengthen relationships, and leave inspired to build bigger, smarter, and better than ever.

An Inspiring Start: Andy Core's Message on Community

The conference opened with a powerful keynote from Andy Core, whose delivery was equal parts motivational, heartfelt, and deeply relevant to the world of pond and water-feature professionals. Andy spoke candidly about the importance of resiliency as well as collaboration in an industry where challenges often require creative thinking, adaptability, and the support of peers. His message landed with unmistakable impact: you are never alone in this industry. When you hit a wall, someone in this community will lend a hand, share a tool, or offer the guidance you need to move forward.













His talk set the tone for the entire event. The pond world is full of generous people who want to see each other succeed, and Andy reminded us just how rare—and how valuable—that kind of culture truly is.

Classes Designed to Elevate Every Professional

From foundational principles to advanced techniques, each session was designed to strengthen professional skills, expand industry knowledge and deliver practical takeaways that could be applied immediately. Attendees gained insight from experienced professionals, engaged in meaningful discussions and explored proven strategies that supported long-term growth.

Product Innovation & System Advancements

The conference kicked off with Built to Rock: The 2026 Product Drop, where Frayne McAtee, Todd Rosendahl, and Kyle Weemhoff unveiled Atlantic-Oase's newest technologies and filtration solutions. Attendees explored the upcoming 2026 product line firsthand, including the highly anticipated ProfiClear Premium XL systems. This session set a strong tone for the conference, giving contractors a forward look at the tools and equipment that will shape next year's builds.

Biological Filtration, Bogs & Swim Pond Engineering

Filtration-focused education took center stage with Rock the Bog: The AO Way, led by Jim Chubb, Brandon Dwyer, and Demi Fortuna, who broke down the science and strategy behind Atlantic-Oase bog construction. The trio covered essential components, pump sizing, proper placement, and maintenance recommendations for creating high-performing, low-maintenance bog systems.

Building on this, Rock Solid Regeneration—taught by McAtee and Dwyer—provided a deeper dive into regeneration-zone sizing for swim ponds. Attendees learned how to design filtration areas based on pond volume, layout, and one of the five primary swim pond styles, ensuring clear, healthy water and long-term system stability.

Installation Mastery & Jobsite Efficiency

Technical training continued on day two with Install Like a Rockstar, where Chubb, Sean Bell, and McAtee demonstrated the differences between pump-fed and gravity-fed ProfiClear installations. Their tips on system layout, trouble-



shooting, and water-level adjustments gave installers practical insights they could apply immediately in the field.

In a parallel track, Daniel Kelley led back-to-back sessions of Toolbox Talks, focusing on jobsite efficiency, tool setup, logistics, and organizational strategies. His "work smarter, not harder" philosophy—rooted in decades of excavation and water garden construction experience—offered attendees a blueprint for improving workflow, profitability, and team performance.

Marketing, Branding & Consumer Communication

For professionals looking to expand their customer reach, BJ Linger's session, Play to the Crowd, delivered a highly actionable roadmap for local marketing. Contractors learned how to strengthen their online presence through targeted advertising campaigns, optimized Google Business listings, stronger website structure, and best practices for AI indexing to improve search rankings.

Brand identity and reputation management continued with Isaac Mashman's two sessions of Own Your Market. Mashman helped attendees define their brand voice, position themselves as local authorities, and leverage social media to expand influence and credibility. His framework emphasized consistency, clarity, and strategic storytelling—key elements for modern contractors navigating an

Honoring Those Who Raise the Bar: The 2025 AO Awards

One of the most powerful traditions of this conference is celebrating individuals and companies whose work makes a lasting impact on our trade. This year's award recipients exemplified the passion, leadership, and dedication that define the pond and water-feature community.

The AO Pro Contractor of the Year Award went to Mat Kapas of Aqua Doc Inc. This honor recognizes a company that consistently demonstrates superior installation quality, exceptional customer service, and an unwavering commitment to continued education. Mat's active engagement with Atlantic-Oase—from advanced trainings to product feedback to social media participation—reflects the professionalism and partnership that set industry standards.





The President's Award went to Connie Piteo of Earth and Waterscapes, a respected leader whose enduring contributions have shaped countless careers. Connie has invested years in educating, mentoring, and uplifting others, and her passion for promoting the industry shines through everything she does. Her recognition this year was not only appropriate—it was inspiring.



The Monster Award was presented by the legendary Lloyd Lightsey, known affectionately as the Pond Monster. Created in his honor, this award recognizes individuals who embody generosity, community spirit, and the massive positive influence that defines what it means to "Live the Pond Life." This year's recipient, Lora Lee Gelles, former Publisher of POND Trade Magazine, received heartfelt applause. Lora Lee's years of service, leadership, and dedication to uplifting others have left a lasting mark on the industry, and seeing her honored was a meaningful moment both personally and professionally.







increasingly digital marketplace.

Communication training reached new depth with Eric Triplett's two-part class, Confidence Under Fire, which focused on emotional intelligence, leadership presence, conflict navigation, and the ability to stay composed during high-pressure sales conversations. His approach emphasized securing the right jobs—not every job—by communicating with confidence, clarity, and healthy boundaries.

Troubleshooting, Problem-Solving & Technical Support

Field problem-solving took center stage in Installer Insider, a panel discussion with James Lavery and Tyler Fisher who shared real-world installation insights and answered contractor questions on the spot. That theme continued with Thank You for Calling Tech Support, where Sean, Patrick, and Andrew Bell walked attendees through pump, filtration, and ProfiClear troubleshooting scenarios based on years of direct customer support experience.

For contractors facing complex or seemingly impossible on-site challenges, Rock, Wrench & Roll—led by Sean Cudmore and Demi Fortuna—offered clever strategies for leak detection, difficult repairs, and moving heavy or awkward materials. Their combined expertise encouraged installers to approach tough jobs with creativity, confidence, and an expanded problem-solving toolbox.

Livestock, Pond Preparation & Aquatic Health

Fish-focused professionals benefited from New Fish, Who Dis?, an in-depth session led by Connie Piteo and Ashley Darocha. They covered koi selection, disease identification, quarantine procedures, and best practices for preparing existing ponds to safely welcome new fish. Their blend of ecological understanding and hands-on experience offered clarity for contractors who work closely with livestock and long-term pond health.

Artistic Design & Water Feature Aesthetics

The curriculum concluded with Rock the Install, a design-driven session taught by Jeff Michaels of Pondering Waters. Michaels demonstrated how thoughtful stone placement, water movement, grade manipulation, and visual flow can transform a standard installation into a truly artistic landscape feature. His focus on aesthetics encouraged contractors to elevate their work beyond function—embracing water feature design as a form of craftsmanship and sculpture.

Industry Leaders and Key Vendors on Display

The vendor showcase brought together a strong lineup of brands and organizations that support the backbone of our industry. Companies such as Carlisle Liner, Outdoor Network Services, the PPA (Pond Professionals Association), and POND Trade Magazine connected with attendees to provide hands-on product education, material demonstrations, technical guidance, and marketing support.

Seeing vendors and contractors engage in meaningful, solution-driven conversations underscored how integral these partnerships are. From liner materials to systems design to business tools, this network helps move our industry forward.

A Community That Truly Rocks

As the conference came to a close, I was reminded once again that the greatest strength of this industry is not found in products or techniques — it is found in the people. The conversations in the hallways, the shared stories over dinner, the willingness to teach, guide and support one another… these moments reflect an extraordinary culture built on collaboration rather than competition.

This sense of unity carried seamlessly into our final evening together at the iconic Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Surrounded by legendary instruments, historic stage costumes and the stories of artists who shaped generations, we had the chance to "rock out" together and experience the true heart of Cleveland. Exploring the exhibits, taking in the electric atmosphere and celebrating the innovators who transformed music provided an energizing and memorable cap to the week.

The night concluded with a fantastic dinner at Nuevo Modern Mexican, where everyone gathered once more to share laughs, reflect on the sessions and enjoy one last moment of camaraderie overlooking the lake. It was the perfect blend of great food, great company and a great city.

The 2025 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference didn't just showcase innovation, artistry and education — it showcased heart. And that, more than anything, is what makes this industry built to rock.

I'm already looking forward to next year.











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Introducing Pond Magic: A Powerful New Line of Water Garden Products & Water Treatments

A new force is entering the water-feature market, Pond Magic, a brand built to deliver high-performance filtration, reliable pump solutions and a full suite of premium water-treatment products for ponds of every size. The line aims to bring innovative and reliable products to the industry including filtration, pumps, aeration, water treatments and additional items

With its official website scheduled for completion in mid-January 2026, Pond Magic is gearing up for a strong debut season and is now accepting early buy orders from retailers and dealers who want to get a jump on their competition.

Pond Magic's initial lineup centers on the core essentials every pond professional relies on: Advanced filtration systems engineered for efficiency, easy maintenance and long-term performance. Durable, energy-efficient pumps designed to keep ponds, water gardens and aquatic displays running smoothly.

Professional-grade water treatments, offered through the Pond Potions line—featuring water clarifiers, algae removers and a growing list of solutions that help maintain clean, healthy water year-round.

Industry professionals can now place orders directly with (JR) Allen Nixon.

General inquiries—including product information, dealer opportunities and updates about the January website launch—can be made at: info@pond-magic.com or by calling 908-566-3463.



Oase North America Announces New Leadership Structure and CEO Appointment

Jeff Weemhoff, currently President of Atlantic-Oase, will be appointed to the Board of Oase North America and will hold the honorary title of President Emeritus and Vice Chairman, in recognition of his many years of leadership, partnership, and contribution to the success of our organization. With his wealth of experience and entrepreneurial spirit, Jeff will continue to support the management team in achieving our growth goals in the North American market. We are deeply grateful for his many contributions and are pleased that he will continue to play a key role in shaping our future through his position on the Board.

Doug Ward, current President of GeoGlobal Partners (an Oase division), will assume the role of CEO, Oase North America, taking overall responsibility for all U.S. operations. Doug has successfully led GeoGlobal Partners for more than 15 years. His track record of building high-performing teams, shaping strategy, and driving operational excellence makes him exceptionally well-suited to lead Oase North America into its next phase of growth. Customers will benefit from his focus on service, operational discipline, and his commitment to simplifying how we operate across all brands and channels.

With Jeff's ongoing involvement on the Board and the combined strengths of our teams, Oase North America is well positioned for its next phase.

EasyPro Introduces Their NEW Brand Look

When we looked at where EasyPro is today and where we're heading, it felt like the right moment to refresh our brand. We've evolved significantly over the years, and we wanted our visual identity to reflect that growth — the products we design, the customers we support, and the standards we hold ourselves to. The new look is modern, clean and intentional, inspired by ripples and bubbles to highlight the two elements at the core of everything we do: moving water and air.

Even with this updated look, our commitment hasn't changed. We remain focused on delivering reliable, innovative solutions that support healthier, more beautiful aquatic environments — from backyard ponds to the largest lake systems. Our packaging and merchandising will gradually transition to the new design as existing materials are phased out, but what's inside the box is the same dependable performance our customers trust.

Ultimately, this refresh is about bringing our visual branding in line with the innovation, quality and experience that have always defined EasyPro. We're excited to share it and grateful for the continued trust of our customers.

Evolution Aqua USA Announces New Additions to its Product Line for 2026!

Evolution Aqua USA is excited to unveil its 2026 product lineup, delivering new filtration innovations, improved water-quality solutions and essential components designed to support retailers, installers and pond professionals heading into the new season.

"These new products reflect our continued commitment to advancing pond technology and giving professionals the tools they need for outstanding water clarity and system performance," said Don Schnoor Evolution Aqua USA National Sales Manager.

- **Nexus Ti Filters:** The trusted Nexus filtration system is now more powerful than ever with the introduction of titanium-enhanced UV clarification. The new Nexus Ti integrates UV units directly into the clean-water outlet, maximizing UV contact time, increasing photocatalytic performance and clearing green water faster—all within a single, streamlined system.
- **Upgraded Tempest Filter:** The compact and reliable Tempest has been refined for 2026 with improved durability including double union ball valves and 3 mm stainless steel brackets, smoother media agitation and enhanced polishing performance with a new waste assembly. The upgraded Tempest offers faster cleaning cycles and greater efficiency, making it ideal as a standalone unit or paired with existing filtration systems.
- **Pure Bale in a Bottle:** Evolution Aqua USA's industry-leading PURE bacteria line expands with Pure Bale in a Bottle, a convenient liquid format that delivers the same trusted multi-strain bacterial blend. It provides rapid startup, improved biological stability and easy dosing for both professionals and hobbyists. PURE Bale In A Bottle is a unique 2-in-1 gel formula that combines matured barley straw with live beneficial bacteria. Made entirely from natural ingredients and completely safe for all pond wildlife, it helps create healthy pond conditions while maintaining a natural clear appearance. Unlike traditional barley straw bales, it delivers the same proven results without the mess.
- **Essential Series Ball Valves:** Rounding out the 2026 lineup, Evolution Aqua USA introduces its new Essential Series Ball Valves, a high-quality double-union design offered at an exceptionally competitive price point. Built for reliability and ease of installation, these valves provide contractors with professional performance without the premium cost.

The full 2026 product range will be available through Evolution Aqua USA and its authorized distributors. For product details or preorder information, contact:
info@evolutionaquausa.com
www.evolutionaquausa.com



PondPros.com Launches New Homeowner-Focused Directory for Pond Contractors

PondPros.com, a new global online directory built by the Pond Professionals Alliance (PPA), is now live and open for business. The platform addresses a long-standing gap in the pond industry by providing homeowners with a centralized, trusted resource to find professional pond and water feature contractors—regardless of brand or manufacturer affiliation.

Designed specifically for consumer use, PondPros.com allows contractors to create verified profiles showcasing their services, service areas, certifications, project photos, and reviews. The directory was developed in collaboration with Jeff Gutowski of Break the Image, bringing deep expertise in contractor marketing and search visibility to the platform.

The Pond Professionals Alliance, a nonprofit trade organization, developed PondPros.com to elevate professionalism, improve customer confidence, and strengthen the industry as a whole.

Claim or create your listing at www.PondPros.com

Trade News

The St. Louis Water Gardens Tour

The St. Louis Water Garden Society will host its 26th-Pond-O-Rama Annual Aquatic Garden and Landscapes Tour on June 27–28, 2026, from 9–5 p.m. each day. Each day of the tour will feature different private water gardens owned and maintained by society members.

The Pond-O-Rama Aquatic Gardens and Landscapes Tour is a self-guided exploration of water gardens throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. The tour provides an opportunity for members to showcase their beautiful gardens, as well as for local landscapers, contractors, and aquatic centers to present water-feature installations and new builds.

A full-color tour booklet serves as both ticket and guide book to each location. The printed book includes photos and descriptions of each host garden - featuring new or upgraded gardens, ponds, and waterfalls, plus directions and accessibility information.

Tour hosts are eager to share their expertise with the public. Many are Master Gardeners who have built native landscapes certified by the Audubon Society. Some of their show-stopping gardens have been featured in local newspapers and magazines, like St. Louis Homes and Lifestyle which sponsors the tour.

The two-day tour showcases a wide variety of water gardens—from newly constructed to well established, intimate spaces to entire yards, with stunning features like bridges, gazebos, koi and goldfish, waterfalls, statues, bubblers and more.

Local landscape architects, designers, and contractors are invited to submit projects to be included on the tour. For consideration, please contact Ginny Mueller, vcmueller16@gmail.com.

In addition to inspiring appreciation for water landscapes, the annual Pond-O-Rama Aquatic Gardens and Landscapes Tour funds the Water Garden Society's civic project—planting and maintaining the lily ponds at the Jewel Box in Forest Park. St. Louis Water Garden Society members volunteer weekly from May through October to make the elegant, serene lily ponds ready for the millions who visit Forest Park each year.

To support this project, please consider becoming an annual St. Louis Water Garden Society member and sponsor. The Society provides excellent resources for water garden enthusiasts through regular, educational programming. If you would like to share your knowledge and expertise with our members, joining is a great first step. Membership information is available on the website, https://slwgs.org.



Tickets for the two-day tour are $25 and will be made available online and at retail locations throughout the St. Louis Metro Area in May 2026.

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The dealer early buy program has the BEST pricing of the year to get your pond department stocked for the spring. It is available from Evolution Aqua USA and your favorite water garden distributors (list of distributors available upon request). The deadline for early buy orders from Evolution Aqua USA is January 31, 2026.

info@evolutionaquausa.com to receive our early buy pricing program, and the 2026 catalog!

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