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## The Pond Hero

Reality TV introduces the  
**Pond Guy of the South** p.51





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## FEATURES

### 8 Art in Stone and Water POND CONSTRUCTION

Picture it: You've just moved from a bustling east coast metropolis to a quaint west coast town, and you're looking to recreate the oasis of tranquility you had in your old backyard. Whom are you going to call? In this case, "the Picasso of rock and water," also known as **Tonja Andreatta**, rises to the occasion. Read all about how she coped with unforgiving terrain and strict local codes to craft a stunning pondless waterfall for two very happy new customers.



### 15 Hardscape Dreamscapes

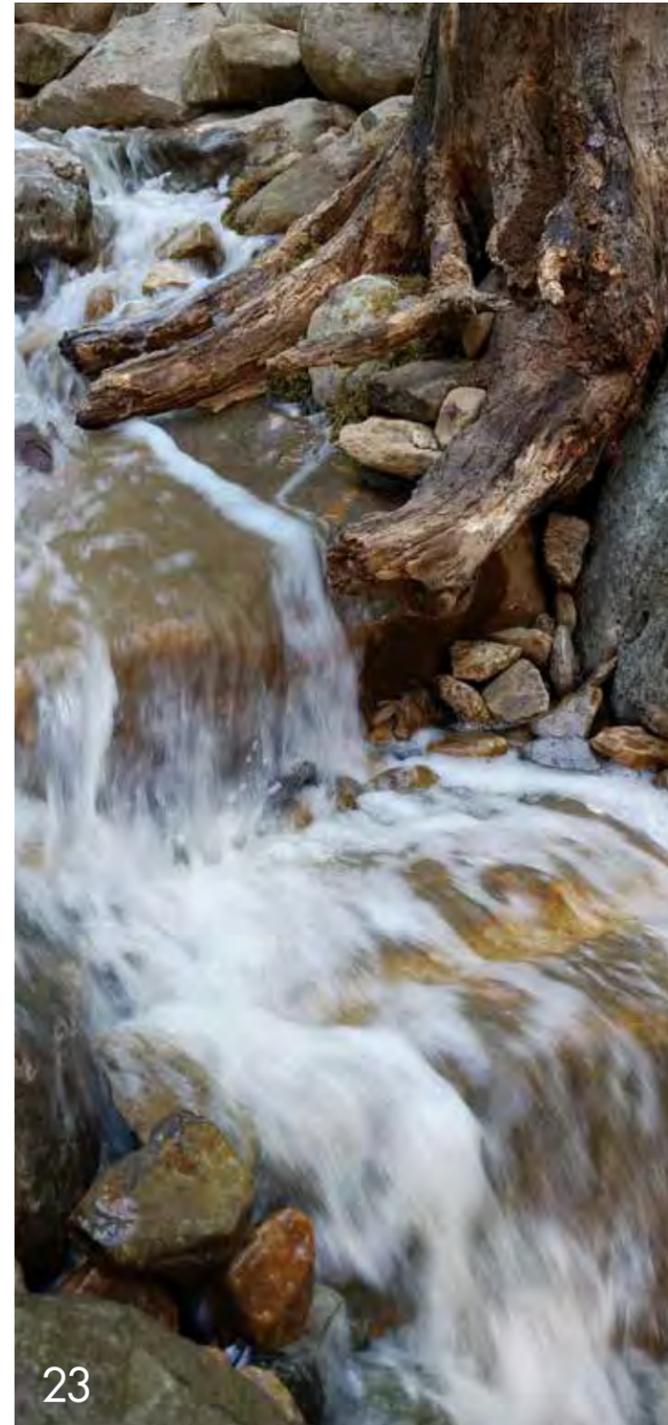
In order to soak up the joy of a beautiful pond or an alluring water feature, you need a place to enjoy it. **Jim Lewis** shows you how to convert your business from single-product sales to full-service solutions. Whether you learn the trade of installing hardscapes yourself or subcontract it out, don't miss the boat on being a one-stop shop for your customers.

### 19 Beauty on a Different Scale LANGUAGE OF KOI

**Taro Kodama** is back with an intriguing profile of Doitsu, a koi variety that has origins of more than a century old and is still making a splash today. Learn how to identify the various types of Doitsu koi and decide whether they're a good fit for your pond or pond shop.

### 23 Drift Away with Wood Elements

Are you "stumped" on how to enhance the aesthetics of your water feature? Turn to pg. 23 for **Tim Wood's** guide to the benefits of adding driftwood, logs and other softer elements to your building repertoire. Careful, though — not all wood elements are created equal, so check it out!



### 31 Formal Pond Design Fundamentals

In a new installment of our "Best Pond Practices" series, **Kent Wallace** delves into the technical details of your pre-shotcrete checklist. From prepping the aeration to perfecting the plumbing to meeting the myriad code requirements, we've got all the bases covered as Kent recounts some of the challenges he overcame during the construction of a formal pond.

### 36 Twenty-five and Counting

Aquascape has become a household name in our industry after a quarter-century in business. The Pond Guy himself — Aquascape founder **Greg Wittstock** — takes you through a history of the company's long journey, from its humble beginnings to becoming one of the leading manufacturers in the world. Learn about how Greg and his team survived bumps in the road and came out ahead.

### 43 Monetizing Maintenance



Construction is complete, and your check is in the mail. But don't stop there! Strike while the iron is still hot and the water is still flowing, or you might be missing out on a lot of extra revenue.

**Alexander Castro** explains how offering your new pond customers a maintenance program is like catching fish in a barrel — in other words, a potentially transformational, recurring boost for your bottom line.

### 51 The Pond Hero

Reality television COVER STORY is all the rage these

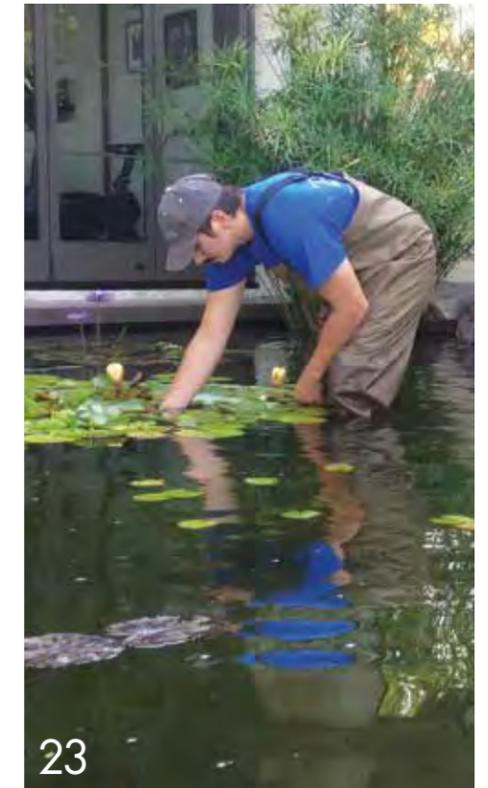
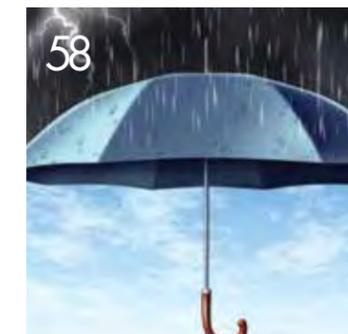
days, but it's rare that it amounts to more than low-brow entertainment.

**Lora Lee Gelles** visited the set of Fox's new series "Home Free" and uncovered a diamond in the rough. Check out our profile of this

month's cover boy, Tommy Hill, the show's star contractor who is bringing new meaning to selfless marketing and philanthropy.

### 58 Weathering the Storm

The forecast may be a bit brighter for business these days than it was seven or eight years ago, but when it rains, it tends to pour. **Michael Stone** outlines a slew of tips to keep in your back pocket for when the climate takes a turn for the worse. Whether flood or drought, Michael's expertise can help you prepare for what lies ahead.



23

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36

# Upcoming Events

2016

August 2 - 4

**SuperZoo 2016**

Mandalay Bay Convention Center  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
www.superzoo.org

August 2 - 4

**IGC East**

Valley Forge Casino Resort  
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania  
www.igcshow.com

August 16 - 18

**IGC Chicago**

Navy Pier Festival Hall  
Chicago, Illinois  
www.igcshow.com

August 24 - 25

**Holmes Farm Pond Trade Show**

Bear Creek Mountain Resort  
Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania  
877/412-3276

August 24 - 28

**PONDEMONIUM**

The Q Center  
St. Charles, Illinois  
www.aquascapeinc.com/pondemonium

October 19 - 21

**Hardscapes and GIE+EXPO**

Kentucky Exposition Center  
Louisville, Kentucky  
www.hardscapena.com  
www.gie-expo.com

October 25 - 28

**IWGS Symposium**

Hotel El Castellano Gamma de Fiesta Inn  
Mérida, Mexico  
www.iwgs.org

November 2 - 4

**International Pool | Spa | Patio Expo**

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
www.poolspapatio.com

December 5 - 9

**Irrigation Show & Education Conference**

Las Vegas Convention Center  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
www.irrigation.org/irrigationshow

2017

January 11 - 13

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Baltimore Convention Center  
Baltimore, Maryland  
www.mants.com

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# Publisher's Perspective

## Perpetual Pond Passion

In the last issue, I was super excited about "Living the Pond Life" and wrote my column about it. Well — it happened again. I'm not sure how much excitement this publisher can take in one year!



I received an email out of the blue from the gentleman in the photo below, Blake Mullins. Blake is a consulting producer for a Fox reality television show called "Home Free." I came to find out that one of our own, Tommy Hill, had donated his time and money to some deserving contestants as they competed for a home for the heroes in their lives. I was invited to do a story about Tommy and visit the set,

and I sure did — see what I mean about excitement? What's next? Will I wake up one morning before the next issue to find a half-acre pond in my backyard that magically appeared overnight? Please turn the pages and read all about this month's cover boy, Tommy Hill.

Of course, we have plenty of other great articles for you to read.

We have two features this month about how to enhance the pond experience using non-aquatic elements. Tim Wood writes about integrating wood materials, such as driftwood and logs, into water features to add a one-of-a-kind, natural touch. We also need a dedicated place to enjoy the soothing sounds of the pond life. Jim Lewis is here to explain how adding hardscapes to your repertoire can make your business a one-stop shop. These guys



have some excellent pointers about well-rounded, diversified pond construction.

Aquascape is celebrating a quarter-century in business, and founder Greg Wittstock provides a riveting look back at his company's history to date. Take a trip back in time with Greg, and you might learn a few things that could keep your operation going strong 25 years on. Finally, I really enjoyed Alexander Castro's rundown of the benefits of offering a personalized pond maintenance program. Not only can it fortify your bottom line, but it can help reignite your passion for the pond as a fluid, ever-changing and evolving way of life.

Happy PONDering!

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*Spt*

## in Stone and Water

A sanctuary of silent treasures in Southern Oregon

by **Tonja Andreatta**,  
Andreatta Waterscapes Inc.

I first met Terry and Wanda when they attended one of Andreatta Waterscapes' pond tour events several years ago, where they fell in love with our style of building. "It soon became clear by the insightful designs and quality of work that we were viewing water features that were not just irrigation troughs flanked with rocks, but mimics of nature in style and design," Terry remarked. Wanda added, "When we saw Tonja's work during the tour, we knew we could trust her design for our project." Wanda and Terry were doing some remodeling, and

when they were ready to design and install their water feature, they called me.

They lived about a half-hour south of me in the quaint little town of Ashland, Oregon. Ashland is located in the foothills of the Siskiyou and Cascade ranges, about 15 miles north of the California border. It has an amazing abundance of outdoor activities and wildlife, and it's also home to the famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The first thing I noticed upon arriving at their house was the steep terrain and the still, wild appearance of their neighborhood and yard, which was filled with ponderosa pine, oak, madrone, douglas fir and maple trees. I spooked a deer that had been lying under a bush as I approached the front door.

The house is built on a hill, and as you enter the



We initially started with this crater (above, left). We plumbed in two pumps (above, right) for maximum control of water flow. We created the option to turn up the water flow in the presence of company and turn it down when no one is around to enjoy it.

living room, you are instantly drawn to gaze out the big bay window that overlooks the backyard from the second story. As I approached the backyard, two things struck me. First and foremost — the five to six spectacular, enormous granite boulders scattered across the yard. It's like being transported into a fairy wonderland with a unique outcropping of rocks not normally found in one's yard. Immediately I wanted to touch one just to comprehend the sheer enormity of it. The second thing that struck me was the giant hole in the yard flanked with surveyor's stakes, tape and color-coded construction line, which, as I found out later, was to help visualize and refine the plan.

### Silent Treasures

To provide a quick background on the situation, Terry and Wanda had two fish ponds filled with koi and fantail goldfish in their Miami home. Terry told me it was relaxing and peaceful to have a drink by the pond

ment. When they moved to Ashland, their new home's yard was a blank page — and naturally, a koi pond was in their plans.

They soon realized that because of the increased footprint of the home after the remodel, the overall slope of the property

**The first thing I noticed upon arriving at their house was the steep terrain and the still, wild appearance of their neighborhood and yard, which was filled with ponderosa pine, oak, madrone, douglas fir and maple trees.**

and watch the koi glide through the water after a tiring day fighting Miami traffic. They called their fish "silent treasures," providing many peaceful hours of therapeutic entertain-

and the large granite boulders, it would be very hard to access the yard again with big equipment. So while trenching and grading for the remodel, they had the contractor dig a



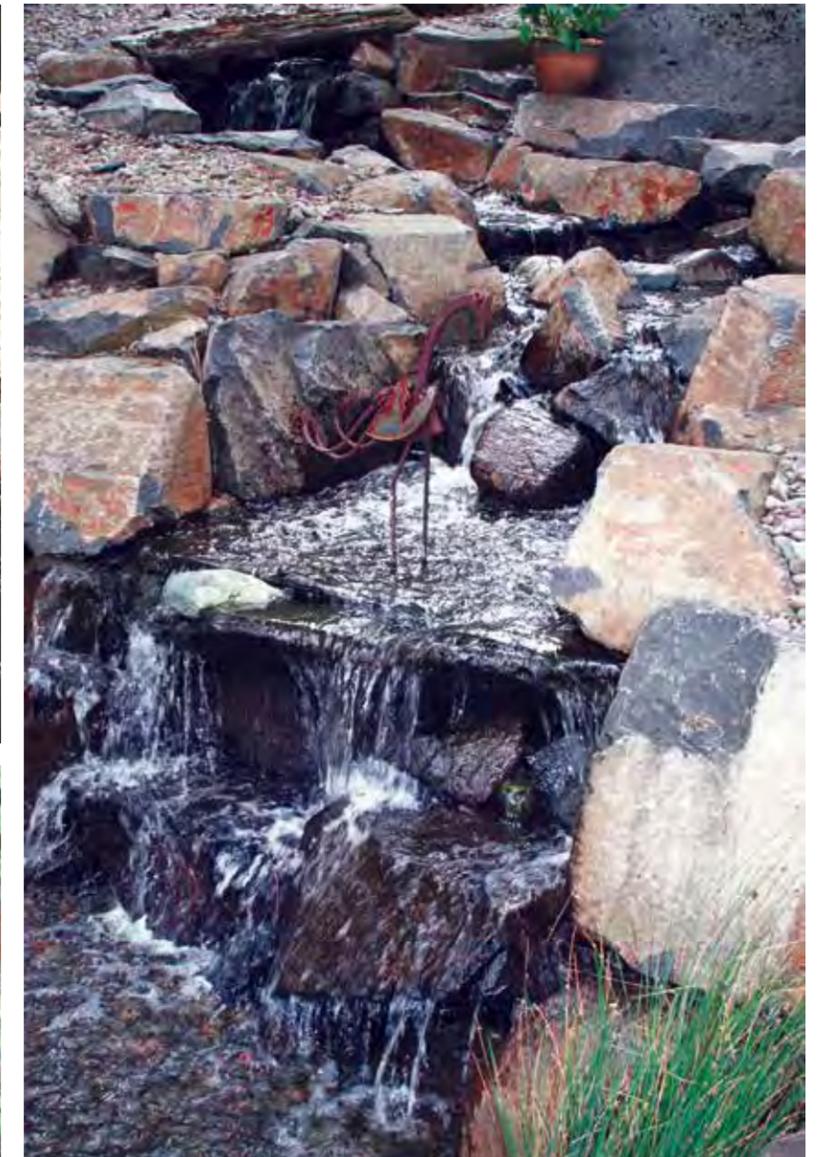
We had to start by demolishing the old rock wall and steps so we could change the grades. Here you can see the access path, which later became a walking path and some planting beds.



We rocked in the water storage tanks and shaped the seating.



The view from the top looking down a waterfall can be just as spectacular as the view looking up a waterfall.



30-foot long, 20-foot wide, 4-foot deep hole for the future koi pond.

### Making Lemonade from Lemons

The original concept was to have a koi pond large enough so that if they wanted, they could get into the pond and cool off with their koi during the summer. It also needed to be deep and wide enough to protect the fish from predators. As time went on, a couple of obstacles became clear. First was the sheer amount of leaf and needle debris from being under the beautiful canopy of trees, which would make maintenance a burden. Next was the city code that dictated that a pond of that depth would have to be fenced off. That really wasn't an option, because Wanda loved the surrounding wildlife, including the deer and turkeys that migrated through the yard. A fence would also be an eyesore in the otherwise unfenced neighborhood. They still wanted a water feature, but without the major pond, it would have to take advantage of the pre-existing hole, require less maintenance, include a seating area and be viewable from the house. Naturally, a pondless waterfall was our answer.

### The Design Process

The design process is where it gets harder for me to write, because I have realized that

I tend to feel my designs more than I think about them. I can usually jot down a basic concept for the customer, but I always explain that it can and does evolve. When I start working with the land and rock, the design really starts to come together. The idea that the rocks show me how they want to be placed is weird, but it's true. Sometimes you can just feel it when a rock finds its proper home.

There are a few rules I have developed over the years to help me build more natural-looking water features. My biggest rule is that the water needs to look like it has cut its way through the earth. If the water is higher than or in front of the existing grades, it will probably leak and certainly will not look natural. With that rule in mind, we almost always completely change the grades as we carve a channel for our stream and waterfalls.

Each customer is so unique in what ideas and vision they bring to the project. Terry and Wanda had an idea of the elements they wanted to include, but they were also extremely generous in letting me guide and change the design. The giant granite boulders were the first thing to determine any kind of layout, because they were not going to be moved. Therefore, they ended up dictating the grade and shape of the water course. Terry had suggested that he would like the water to split around one of the granite boulders that

was central to the water feature. However, I felt that it would be a distraction to the senses and wanted to focus on just one active water course, making the other side look like a dry stream or abandoned waterfall. It was an agreeable compromise, and in the end they thought it was a wise choice.

There was also an expressed interest in viewing the water at eye level. The big hole that was previously dug for a pond was perfect for converting half into a disappearing water basin and the other half into an intimate patio at the water's edge. We sculpted the hole a bit more and added rock work for the integrity of holding back the hill and blending the space seamlessly with the water course. Normally, you can't plan a sunken patio without facing flooding concerns in the winter, but because the soil on-site was porous, decomposed granite with excellent drainage, this was not an issue.

Any time I get to work on a hillside, I'm like a kid in a candy store, because there is no better setting for a water feature — especially one as beautiful as this particular one. Of course, hillsides offer their own challenges, like safety, access, staging and transporting supplies. Everything on this job was staged in a lower driveway and then brought in through a side yard and up a steep, winding path that we created after taking out some



There is about 50 feet of meandering stream (above) and about 8 feet in elevation. This weir of this waterfall (top, right) is a piece of driftwood found on the property. The crew (right) got it all done. Photos by Jenny Lane photography.





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rickety, poorly-built steps. Everything was brought in piece by piece with a walk-behind Bobcat only 3 feet wide. I managed to get my mini excavator up the path once, which was enough. I wouldn't traverse it again until I took it off the hill when the job was done. I prefer to build from the bottom up, but sometimes I have to build from the top down, which was the case here as we worked our way out of the yard. After we had finished and left the site, the access points and paths that were made while we were building had become the perfect place to build planting beds and beautiful flagstone walkways and steps.

**The Scientific and Creative Minds Combine**

Terry is a former marine geologist and has a very scientific, rational mind — unlike my emotional, creative one. He took pictures of the daily progress to document where each pipe and cable was buried in the yard for future reference. He put together a really neat picture board that he displays when their yard is showcased on garden and pond tours. They have access to irrigation water for the summer

months and city water for the fall, winter and spring. Terry put in a flow meter to monitor his city water use, and he has reported that he only uses one gallon a day on average during those off-months. The two, 6,600-gph pumps that I installed were wired into switches and a timer in his house, so he can cycle the pumps and run the waterfalls on a high or low-flow setting.

**Art in Stone and Water**

Terry dubbed me "the Picasso of rock and water," adding that "her excavator is her brush, and the land her canvas." While I don't completely agree, I am very flattered and humbled by these words. They said that it was a pleasure to watch a patch of dirt and weeds transform into an incredibly natural-looking piece of "art in stone and water." One of Wanda's long-time friends visiting from North Carolina added, "You know, that looks just like a creek by my house." They love the soothing sounds through the windows at night, and one thing everyone agrees on for sure is that wine and cheese taste better by the waterfall. Maybe we did create some magic with stone and water after all. ☺

**About the Author**

**Tonja Andreatta** is a native of Southern Oregon and the president of Andreatta Waterscapes Inc., a water feature business that specializes in building and maintaining natural-style ponds, streams and waterfalls. Tonja's background includes 12 years in the green industry, owning and operating a grounds maintenance company. After installing her own pond, she realized the treasures of water gardening and set out to make her hobby a full-time business. She has developed a distinct style and a reputation as an expert in her field. Her clients rave about the amazing show pieces their outdoor spaces have become. Thanks to her creativity and technical knowledge of working with natural materials in the environment, she has been able to create the perfect custom water feature for each space, which her clients enjoy year-round. Her love of nature and the environment is palpable when looking at her ponds and waterfalls. Her motto is, "Dirty hands are happy hands!"



Terry boasts that wine and cheese taste better by the waterfall. Photo by Jenny Lane photography.

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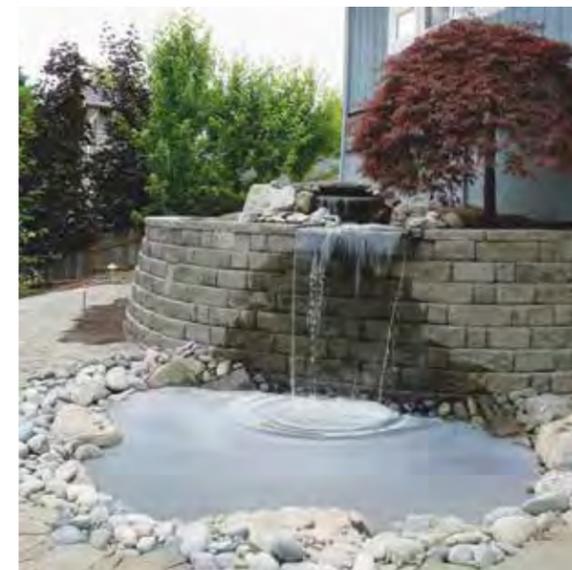


We built this water feature with a dry-laid flagstone patio surrounding the area.

# Hardscape Dreamscapes

Don't miss the boat on becoming a **one-stop shop**

by **Jim Lewis**,  
Lewis Landscape Services



This water feature is built into both the retaining wall and the paver patio surrounding the pond area.

Creating beautiful water features is probably your passion. You're good at it. It's your niche. But today's customers are often wanting more than just a water feature — they're also wanting a place to enjoy it! You've already likely added things like outdoor lighting and planting to supplement your water feature installations, so including hardscapes in your repertoire is the next natural step.

Adding hardscaping has many benefits to the water feature installation contractor, including:

- Giving your client and their visitors an area to enjoy the water feature;
- Adding ambience to the area around the water feature;
- Providing more options for building enhancements to the water feature;
- Increasing sales revenue and profit;
- Creating an opportunity to sell more outdoor lighting;
- Allowing you to build around the water feature so that the water feature and the hardscape blend together seamlessly;

- Enabling you to keep more money in-house; and
- Generating upsell opportunities.

### But I'm a Pond Contractor!

You may be thinking, "I don't know how to build hardscapes." And that's OK! There are plenty of ways to work your way into it.

There is no reason you have to be the installer in the first place. Several years ago, I didn't know how to install hardscapes, nor did any of my employees. But we started getting a lot of requests for hardscape work, and I had been sending my customers to other hardscape companies to get that work done. After a while, I realized that there were two problems with this. First, I was making those companies rich. And more importantly, I was sometimes losing jobs, because the client wanted to work with one single contractor and not several. So, they'd typically give the job to someone else who could handle all the aspects of the job they wanted — not me.

I began to realize that even if I subcontracted the hardscape work to someone else and included my standard mark-up, the

customers were still happy with my quote, as long as I would oversee it all. Even if you aren't skilled at installing quality hardscaping, you can subcontract that work, mark it up a fair percentage and still contract the entire job to your clients. I've generally found



This paver pathway and patio was built around the natural curves in the water feature, making the feature the main focal point.

that if there was something we couldn't do in-house, we could always hire a quality, affordable contractor and still land the job. You should be able to mark up a subcontractor at least 30 percent and still win jobs.

There were certain kinds of hardscapes we were able to do, and other kinds we weren't. For instance, we had installed dry-set flagstone patios but had never done interlocking pavers. So if a client wanted a hardscape, we would often push them

toward a flagstone patio, knowing that we could pull that job off in-house. And if they really insisted on pavers, we would subcontract the hardscape portion. Either way, we were making good money.



This water feature was built in conjunction with a nice paver patio right next to it. Our clients wanted a water feature in a secluded part of their backyard as well as a dedicated place to enjoy the water feature.

### Learn Your Way to DIY

Over time, as we were watching our hardscape subcontractor do their work, we began to realize that it wasn't as intimidating as we had previously thought. In fact, one of my workers came to me and said, "I don't think you need to hire those paver guys anymore. We've been watching them, and we're pretty sure we can do that, too. In fact, one of our guys did a lot of that at the last company he worked for."

And so it started. After having subcontracted more than a dozen jobs to a specialty hardscape company, we decided to give the next job a go ourselves. It took some time for us to be able to do it just right, but in time we became even better at hardscapes than the company we had learned from.

Today, we'll rarely install a water feature that isn't integrated

with a hardscape that we're building for our client. Sometimes the water feature transitions right into the hardscape area. Sometimes the water feature is a part of the hardscape. And other times, they just complement one another.

Sometimes the hardscape area we install is a flagstone patio. Other times it's a custom-built, interlocking concrete patio. Sometimes it even involves retaining walls, rock walls, gravel patio areas, fire pits, seating and more. Often, the addition of the hardscape provides us additional opportunities to install more plants and outdoor lighting, both high-profit margin items for us.

However you do it, if you are not currently installing hardscapes along with your water features, you are missing the boat. ☞



The water feature (above) was built right into a segmental wall inside a paver patio. This 40-foot water feature and stream (below) led right up to the edge of an outdoor living space that included a paver patio, covered structure and outdoor kitchen.



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Tommy Hill,  
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### About the Author

**Jim Lewis** is the founder and president of Lewis Landscape Services, a design-build firm in Beaverton, Oregon, that focuses on custom residential installations. For 20 years, his firm has been one of the largest residential-only firms in the Pacific Northwest. With annual sales of more than \$4 million, his company employs 45 people, most of them year-round.



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| Language of **Koi** |



Doitsu Kujaku (left) from Marusaka Koi Farm; Shusui (right) from Fukasawa Koi Farm

## Beauty on a Different Scale

Old-world Doitsu brings new appreciation to the pond

**by Taro Kodama,**  
Kodama Koi Farm

**K**oi of the Doitsu variety have few to no scales. Doitsu goi are old, yet new — they were developed more than 100 years ago, but many new varieties keep coming from Doitsu varieties. Because of their characteristics, they can be crossed with almost any koi variety. Like the diamond-scaled Ginrin, Doitsu has contributed to

the increased varieties of koi. Doitsu Kohaku, Doitsu Showa, Doitsu Sanke and Doitsu Shiro Utsuri are just a few of these varieties.

### Koi Meets World

As you know, carp serves as a food source in many countries. Scaleless carp was originally developed as an easy fish to cook in Germany. In 1904, scaleless carp were imported to Japan as a new food source. Then, a new type of carp was introduced to Japanese scaled koi to develop what we call Doitsu

now. As you might easily imagine, the Doitsu name came from "Deutsch," which means German.

In Doitsu goi, you will find two types: mirror koi and leather koi. Mirror koi have large scales on the back and the sides of the body. Leather koi have almost no scales; they literally have leather-like skin.

In 1908, the first Doitsu variety was developed by Mr. Kichigoro Akiyama. He crossed a scaleless female with an Asagi, creating a Shusui. If you compare Shusui and Asagi, you can understand that Shusui is the Doitsu version of Asagi, with blue scales and red markings on the sides.

### Tipping the Scales

It may sound strange to pay attention

to scales when we look at scaleless koi. But because Doitsu have fewer scales, how the limited scales are laid out affects the total look of the fish. One irregularly sized scale in the wrong place could affect the beauty of an otherwise perfect koi.



Doitsu Metallic Ochibashigure from the Koshiji Koi Farm

Doitsu goi, as mentioned above, have scales on their backs along the dorsal fins and on the lateral lines of their bodies. If there are visible scales, they should line up all the way in a consistent manner.

If you think about it, it can be such a challenge to have the perfect scale layout in Doitsu. No matter how perfect everything else is, one wrong scale in Doitsu goi can affect the beauty entirely. Therefore, it's not a surprise that breeders generally try to breed Doitsu with as few scales as possible. It is easier to breed many koi with fewer scales than to breed one koi with a perfect scale layout.

### Dazzling Doitsu

After examining the presence of scales on a Doitsu, you now go back to the basics of appreciating each variety. For

example, if you were looking at a Doitsu Kohaku, after seeing the Doitsu qualities, you should see the koi as a regular, scaled Kohaku, checking the quality of *hi* and

*shiroji* and the balance of the two colors.

I remember when I first started working for my father. It was about the time when Heisei Nishiki, a Doitsu version of Yamato Nishiki, came out and gained a lot of popularity. Yamato Nishiki is a metallic version of a Sanke. In other words, Heisei Nishiki is a Doitsu metallic Sanke. For some reason, I never liked Yamato Nishiki, perhaps because *sumi* were always weak on the metallic body. But as soon as I saw Heisei Nishiki, I could not believe how beautiful it was, simply by turning the scaled skin into leather skin. The shine of the body went very well with the three colors of Sanke.



Lemon Hariwake from Aokiya Koi Farm

Two of the latest Doitsu goi are Doitsu Goshiki and Doitsu metallic Ochibashigure. These varieties are still developing, and a good one may be hard to come by. But if you ever do see one, you may not want to miss it, and you certainly will not forget it.

Marketing the Doitsu variety should not be difficult, especially considering the metallic bodies. Many people cherish the smooth skin of these koi; you just may need to teach them these basic points of appreciation.

Recommending specific breeders for this kind is not easy, because Doitsu can be bred from many varieties. Koshiji Koi Farm is definitely a good place to start. Aokiya Koi Farm and Marusaka Koi Farm in Niigata are also worth checking out. ☞

### About the Author

**Taro Kodama** is the president of Kodama Koi Farm, the largest importer and distributor of quality Japanese koi in the United States. With locations in Japan, Hawaii, New York and New Jersey, Kodama Koi Farm carries more than 35,000 Japanese koi from the top breeders in Japan. Taro, along with his father, Mamoru, not only provide show-winning koi, but they also conduct many koi seminars.



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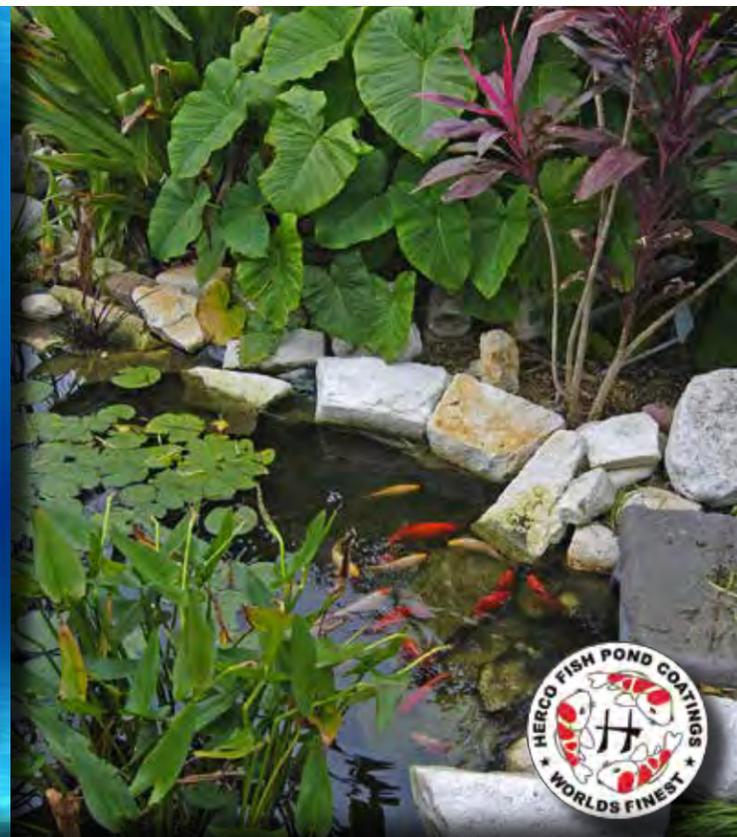


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## | Wood Elements |

# Drift Away

Blend the aesthetics of hard and soft with wood elements

**by Tim Wood,**  
Aquatic Edge Pond &  
Landscape Solutions

If you're reading this magazine, chances are you're at some point of your professional pond-contracting career. And I'd guess that the odds are also pretty good that, just like I, you are continually looking for ways to improve your craft. In this article we are going to talk about ways to utilize some of your local natural materials to add the perfect finishing touches to the water features you love to create. Specifically, we will be talking mostly about wood elements — driftwood, stumps and logs.

Finding the perfect balance between function and design is a struggle for many contractors. Most of us build ponds using boulders or some other type of stone work. We also like to add plantings in and around water features for added filtration and beauty. But sometimes the mix of hard materials such as stone and soft

materials like plants can look out of place if not designed properly. It can almost feel like an unnatural meshing of two extremes.

world, wood can serve as an aesthetic medium between the stones and plantings. Wood offers the perfect balance of characteristics: hard, with an organic,



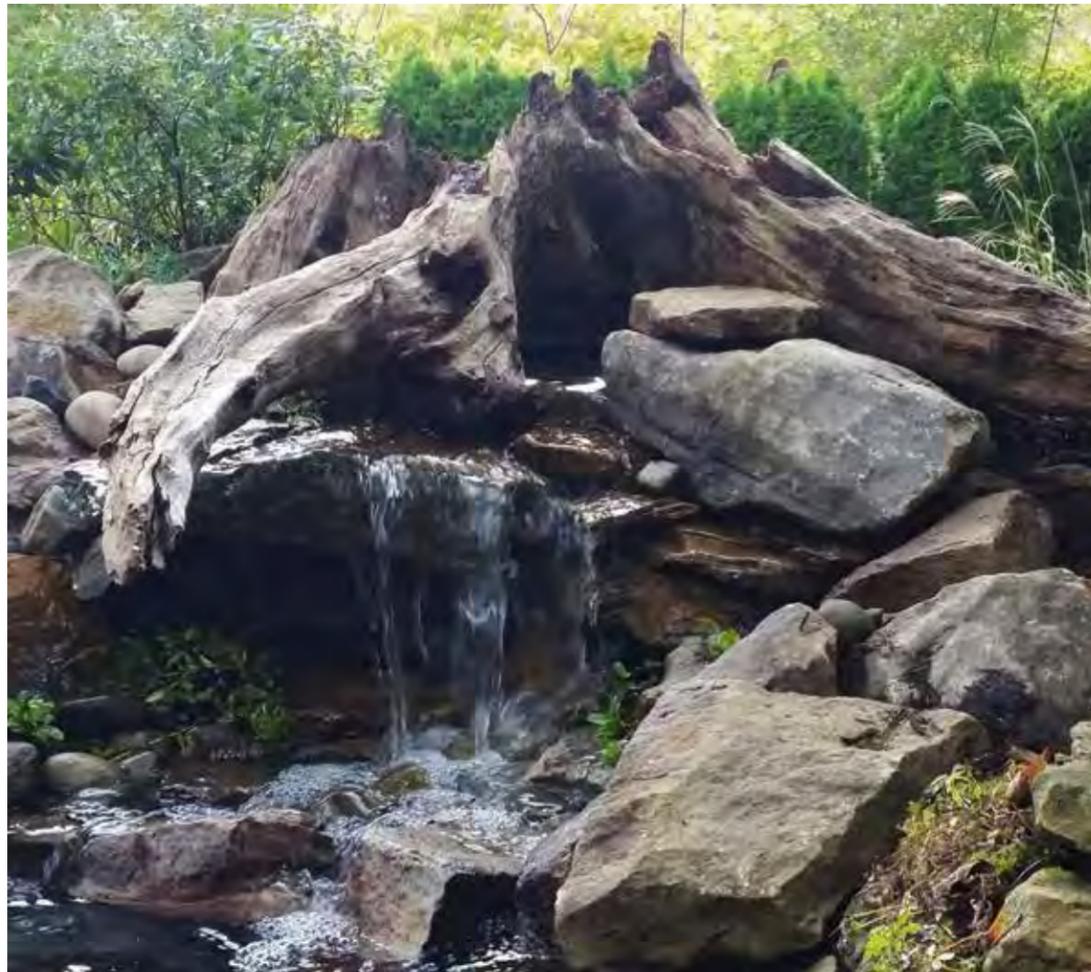
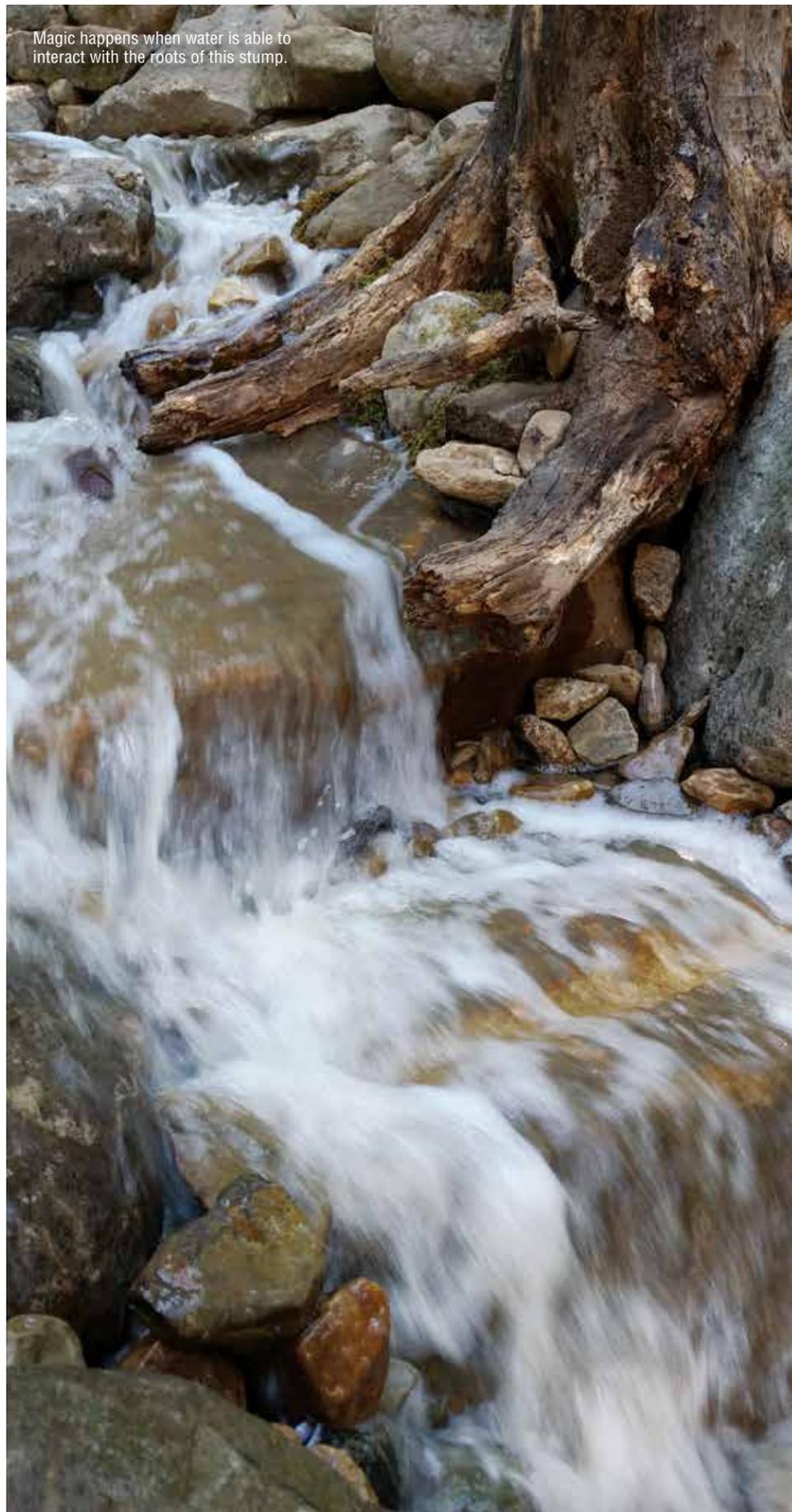
An old stump serves as a nice complement to this basalt water feature.

### So Why "Wood" You?

Wood is an amazingly versatile material in water feature aesthetics. I like to think of it as a medium — just like a psychic is supposedly a medium between the real world and the spiritual

earthy texture. It can be a functional and structural component like stone, yet it is not such a cold, hard material. I find that simply placing between one and three wood elements in a small or mid-sized water feature adds

Magic happens when water is able to interact with the roots of this stump.



just enough medium to bridge the gap between hard and soft materials.

Let's go over the different types of

strategically in a stream or waterfall to create the illusion that it has been weathered by the water's current.

**Stumps look great when integrated at the water line. Place a stump beside the stream so the flowing water just tickles the roots. Or try submerging the roots a few inches below the pond surface to add a new habitat for fish and frogs.**

wood elements that may be available to pond builders around the country.

### Driftwood

Driftwood may come in the form of tree trunks, roots or branches. What earns it the distinction of driftwood is the fact that it once washed ashore on a body of water. Generally speaking, driftwood is great for use in water features because it is nicely weathered and fully cured. Good driftwood will be very resistant to rot and decay.

It often has a smooth appearance due to many years of weathering in the sun and water. This is advantageous particularly if your goal is to build a pond that looks like it has been in the ground forever. Try placing a piece of driftwood

### Stumps

These are my personal favorite. A good stump can be difficult to find! I've found nice stumps in various places, such as an old fence row on a farm, along the side of a country road and in the middle of the woods. Many you come across will be either too hard to get out of the ground or too soft to move without crumbling.

A perfect stump in my eyes comes from just the right recipe. A tree between 6 and 18 inches in diameter was cut down decades ago. The stump was left in the ground with about a foot or more of trunk standing. The exposed cut end has weathered considerably. The main roots are still intact and relatively solid, yet they easily break a couple of feet from the

Driftwood (above, left) can be used to hide a waterfall filter or other filtration components. It can also add a vertical element to this waterfall (left). A broken piece of old log (below) will soften the look of rocks in a stream.



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trunk. A little rocking back and forth should free the stump from its earthly confines, and voila — you have a beautiful piece of water feature art to use.

Stumps look great when integrated at the water line. Place a stump beside the stream so the flowing water just tickles the roots. Or try submerging the roots a few inches below the pond surface to add a new habitat for fish and frogs.

### Logs

You never know when you'll come across an interesting log. I've found some pretty sweet pieces behind a customer's home in a wood pile. When it comes to logs, I like to find the really gnarly-looking ones. Hollow sections, mushrooms, moss growth and nubs from old branches can add a lot of character. Out of the



Here's one of my favorite logs I've found. This hollow log is a key part of our signature water feature installed at a local commercial property.

log is only marginally appealing aesthetically, I might just leave it in the woods as opposed to using it in a water feature since it would need to be replaced in a few years.

Logs can make amazing standalone water features or can be incorporated around a pond's edge. Hollow logs look especially great if they have some water flowing through them. Soft logs are not recommended inside a pond, as they deteriorate rather quickly with potentially adverse effects on the water clarity.

### Before You Harvest

Not all ponds and water features will benefit from using wood elements, but a lot of them can. Proper selection of the right

three types of wood discussed in this article, logs can offer some of coolest features but will come with the trade-off of being relatively soft and susceptible to rot. I've found that you have to make a firm decision regarding each individual piece you may want

to use. I weigh the artistic factor of the log against the predicted amount of time that it will stay structurally viable. If I think a log is going to last only about five years before crumbling, I still might use it if it looks really cool. On the other hand, if a particular

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This piece of driftwood adds a nice touch to a pondless waterfall.

type of wood for each situation is very important. Consider the style of feature you are building. Wood elements are perfect for naturalized styles, but the right piece can also be a tremendous addition to a more formal feature.

Educate your customers on the realistic expectations of wood elements you plan to use. Some of them will be leery, thinking that the wood will rot extremely quickly and ruin their pond. Discuss what you will do for them if the wood doesn't last as long as you think it will. Will you replace it for free with a similar piece, or will you charge for it? Will you remove the wood and add stone or plantings in its place? Depending on the intricacy of your design, you may or may not be able to swap out a soft log for a newer one.

Stumps and logs have a strong tendency to add tannins to the water. Depending on the size of your water feature and the amount of water flowing over the wood piece, this may or may not become an issue for your customer. Driftwood is usually more stable and less prone to causing

discolored water.

The softer the wood piece, the more it can wick water out of a pond. If you install a log that is half in water and half on dry ground, expect some level of wicking and water loss.

Don't overlook smaller pieces of wood like bark and small branches. You can use waterfall foam to adhere them to the lip of a spillway, an exposed light fixture or other materials you wish to hide. Check your local and state regulations if you are thinking about harvesting driftwood, stumps or logs from nature. Transporting wood across state lines may be illegal. State and national forests are probably not good areas for harvesting wood due to various regulations.

I love experimenting with different ways to use wood elements in water features. I think it is a great way to add a one-of-a-kind, completely customized touch to an installation. My goal is usually to make water features look as natural as possible, and the perfect driftwood, stump or log is a key component of my success.

## About the Author

**Tim Wood** is a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor and the owner of Aquatic Edge Pond & Landscape Solutions, located in the Greensburg area in western Pennsylvania. Tim specializes in natural-style ecosystem koi ponds and water features.



Tim is also the owner of Aquatic Edge Consulting, a lake management company. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Lake Management Society, the Society of Lake Management Professionals and other organizations associated with lake management. Aquatic Edge Consulting also offers an exclusive, specialty line of natural bacteria products developed specifically for use in lakes and large, earth-bottom ponds.

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### Formal Ponds

Second in a series



## Formal Pond Design Fundamentals

Perfect the foundation before you pour it

by **Kent Wallace**,  
Living Water Solutions

**W**ith the popularity of formal-entry and courtyard ponds increasing, the ability to incorporate proper system design is essential to long-term success. This project in particular was both a challenge and a joy to be involved with. The initial design showed it to be approximately 8,000 gallons with

**SERIES:**  
Best Pond Practices  
*This is an installment of an ongoing, multi-part series. Be sure to watch for further installments in future issues!*

an L-shaped, floating stone walkway from the entry to the front door inside the courtyard. Planters were to be constructed on two sides of the pond, with the remaining sides serving as the foundation of the house. The owner-turned-contractor decided to install a shotcrete shell as one complete unit, eliminating cold joints and creating the planters at the same time.

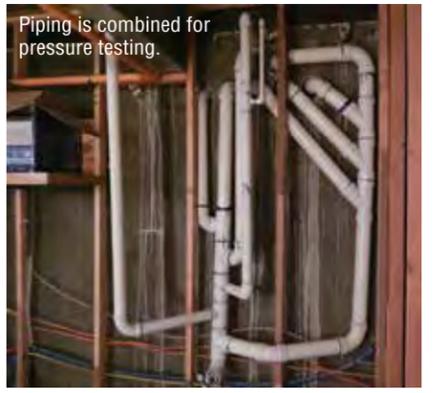
#### Aeration Location

At 8,000 gallons, a turnover rate of

1-1/2 times per hour through filtration would be ideal. Space for equipment in the filter area was unavailable at the pond with no waterfall — just a small spill from a long trough constructed from an 8-foot H-beam. Placing equipment in the courtyard would have taken away from the formal, still-pond look. Fortunately, the filter room was located on the other side of the wall with plenty of space for filtration. The challenge was that the floor in the equipment room was 12 feet below water level. All the equipment needed to be pressurized, but at that depth, there was no way to aerate one of the filters for pond oxygenation. After much deliberation, a spot in the corner of the garage above the equipment room had space to place one biofilter at water level, allowing for it to be aerated.

The system was divided into three circuits of 4,000 gallons each, for a total of 12,000 gph. Four 3-inch, aerated bottom drains and two skimmers pulled water from the pond while nine adjustable floor returns brought water back into the pond. The floating stone walkway effectively divided the surface into two areas, so one skimmer was placed on each side of

the walkway. The returns and drains were spaced as evenly as possible around the floor in an effort to keep the area clean and free of debris.



#### Piping Predicaments

With all the equipment at or below water level, there was effectively no static head — only dynamic head. The number of pipes to and from the pond required 12 holes to be bored through the wall. The four bottom drains were each connected to individual 3-inch pipes to the filter room with no tees under the pond. These were tied together in pairs in the filter room to allow for individual cleaning as

the pond matures. Each bottom drain had a 5-inch, fine bubble diffuser on its dome cover operated by an air pump on a timer. The return circuits were in sets of three 2-inch adjustable floor returns from 3-inch return piping. One skimmer received an electronic, automatic fill, and the other had a 1 1/2-inch overflow plumbed to drainage outside the courtyard. The air discs on the drains each needed separate, 1/2-inch lines with air loops to prevent backflow, so the area of one raised planter just above the position where the holes were bored through the wall provided a good spot for this.

With all the major issues worked out, it was time to build. The contractors on-site and the superintendent were all amazing and worked quickly. One day later, I returned to find all 12 holes bored with nice rubber spacers placed in the holes ready for pipe. Four 3-inch drain lines, three 3-inch return lines, two 2-inch skimmer lines, one 3/4-inch auto-fill line, one 3/4-inch electrical sleeve, and one hole for all four 1/2-inch air lines were

ready for pipe. A couple of days later, all the plumbing was laid out and stubbed into the filter room. I have to say that working with a plumbing crew that does houses instead of pools was a joy. These guys definitely knew the concepts of gravity flow and plumbing — like a toilet with no pressure compared to a toilet with pressurized plumbing.

### Coping with Codes

Because all the piping was consisted of individual runs, the inspector wouldn't allow for each line to be pressurized separately. The plumbers had to create an elaborate manifold with all the pipes coming together into one gauge. The difficulty was that the piping needed to be behind the walls to hide it as much as possible in the equipment room, so they had to predetermine the initial direction of each pipe behind the wall and plumb accordingly.

Rebar went in and was inspected with only one issue. The bonding code had recently been changed. Instead of



Drains and returns (top photo) were marked through the wall into the filter room. The bottom photo depicts the plumbing.

a No. 4 wire going from one spot on the rebar to the pumps directly, the new code required a complete loop around the perimeter of the structure. One short section should have been looped out into the surrounding landscape — approximately 24 inches — and back. The bonding wire assembly was connected to the pumps as before. Each stepping stone pillar required a No. 4 wire from the steps to the bonding loop. Pumps can generate a current that is transferred into the water column, so the new code ensures that there is no place on or in the pond where a current could flow from the water to someone's foot. The code makes no allowance for polyuria, which completely insulates and seals the pond. I would consider this a good thing.

Once the pressure test was complete, the caps were cut, and the returns and drains were installed. This is one area that is different from pool construction. It is difficult to pressurize a pond drain line because of its design. In a plastered pool, the lines are cut after shotcrete, and the drains and returns are installed with the plaster coat. In a pond, the drains, returns and skimmers all need mechanical clamping faces for polyurea or other flexible coating. The floor returns have 2-inch threads and could have been installed and plugged earlier for the pressure test. Installing them after the rebar allows for them to be placed exactly at finished floor level.

Ready for shotcrete! In the next installment of this series, we will tackle the polyurea and the equipment room in detail. ☞

### About the Author

**Kent Wallace** was born and raised in Las Vegas. Kent spent most of his adult life in the automobile industry at independent shops and dealerships, including his own shop as a race car fabricator at age 24. Then, in 2001 a neighbor asked Kent if he could build her a koi pond like the one Kent's father had.

From that point on, pond building became his new passion. That first pond he built was submitted to Better Homes & Gardens magazine and won Best Courtyard Nationwide in their special interest publication.

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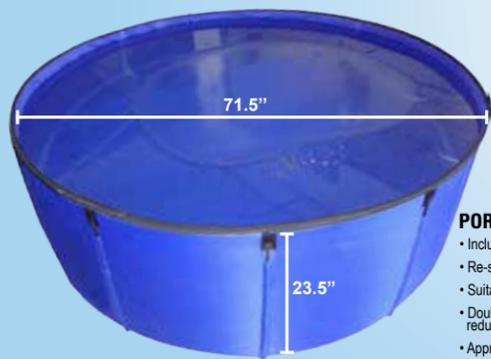


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Simply hook up airlines and incoming power and the system is ready to go.

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Like many in this industry, I got my start with a wheelbarrow, shovel and a strong back. My second season I bought my first vehicle — this truck.

# twenty-five and counting

Aquascape celebrates 25 years in the industry

by **Greg Wittstock**,  
Aquascape Inc.

If you have been in the water gardening business for 10 years or more, you've certainly had a front-row seat for the evolution as well as the devolution of our industry. We've gone from an era of seemingly every contractor having a pickup truck and retailer having a storefront doing and carrying water features, to water features serving as primarily a niche item handled by specialists.

Indeed, the specialty water feature contractors and retailers are not just surviving, but thriving. If the macroeconomic picture of our industry appears bleak, the microeconomic reality for the passionate companies who remain in the water feature industry today is bright! As Aquascape enters the milestone of its 25th anniversary, the landscape of the waterscaping industry is very different from when we started.

The opportunities in our market are still there — you just need a much more focused effort to uncover them. And, at least in my case, a positive outlook with a little perspective from the school of hard knocks doesn't hurt, either!

## Humble Beginnings

I launched Aquascape in 1991 as a summertime job to make some spending cash, and I had no problem landing work through some very rudimentary marketing efforts. Classified ads in the newspaper, a flyer at the local rock yard and word-of-mouth advertising helped me land five jobs totaling \$21,000 in sales with a tidy, \$11,000 net profit for my three months of efforts. Ah, the good-old, simple days!

The following season I installed 12 jobs before I learned the power of publicity. The Chicago Tribune ran a front-page story on what I had created with Aquascape, and it

literally changed the course of my life. My phone began ringing off the hook, ultimately landing me 81 jobs! All of the sudden, my fun, summer adventure of getting paid for doing what I loved had become my career, and soon enough, landscapers were subbing out "that pond guy" with Aquascape to build their water features.

## Building the Team & Catalog

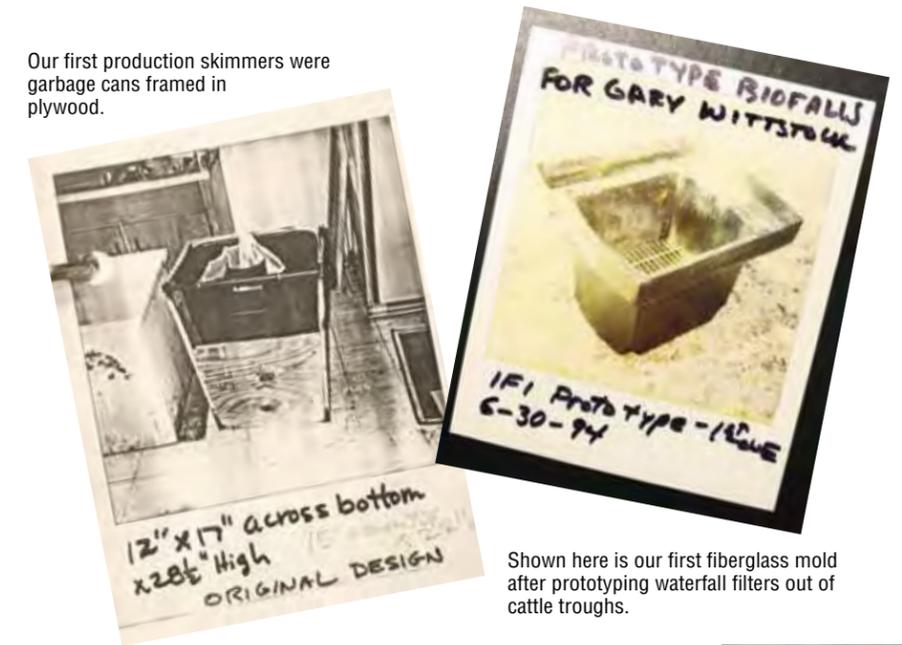
One thing led to another, and soon enough, landscapers were asking to buy my products so they could do the installations themselves. I recruited my father, Gary Wittstock, who had recently taken an early retirement, and together we set out to create the industry's first commercial skimmer and biological waterfall filters. Soon after, a young scientist named Ed Beaulieu

was intrigued by the title of a talk we gave at a local library, "The Aquascape Ecosystem," and he subsequently joined our team. Ed joined me along with

three or four other laborers in the field. Almost immediately, we began experimenting with custom-designed, fiberglass prototypes based on our original garbage can mechanical skimmers and biological cattle trough waterfall filters. It was an exciting and crazy time for us all, with my father dealing with patent attorneys, tool and dye makers and plastic factories. Our collaborative efforts resulted in the pond industry's first-ever commercial skimmer and waterfall filters. It felt like we had just given birth when we finally saw our first beautiful, rotationally molded units.

In the spring of 1995, armed with our recently-awarded skimmer and Biofalls patents, Aquascape launched the first professional pond products catalog in the industry. With a rented list of landscape contractors, we mailed 26,000 catalogs introducing our products and the Aquascape Ecosystem philosophy to the world. Using our expertise as contractors ourselves, we taught

Our first production skimmers were garbage cans framed in plywood.



Shown here is our first fiberglass mold after prototyping waterfall filters out of cattle troughs.

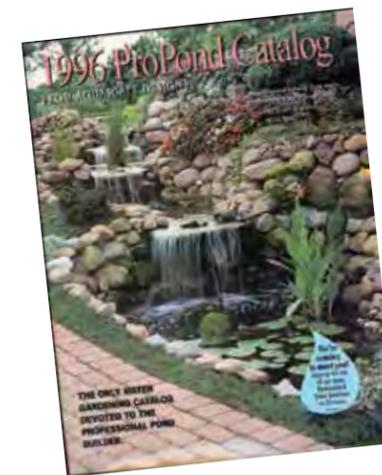
1993

talk we gave at a local library, "The Aquascape Ecosystem," and he subsequently joined our team. Ed joined me along with three or four other laborers in the field. Almost immediately, we began experimenting with custom-designed, fiberglass prototypes based on our original garbage can mechanical skimmers and biological cattle trough waterfall filters. It was an exciting and crazy time for us all, with my father dealing with patent attorneys, tool and dye makers and plastic factories. Our collaborative efforts resulted in the pond industry's first-ever commercial skimmer and waterfall filters. It felt like we had just given birth when we finally saw our first beautiful, rotationally molded units.



Ed Beaulieu

others our 20-step, 20-product approach to systematize and standardize the installation process. This revolutionized the ease with which water features could be installed, and through our catalog, classroom and hands-on builds, we spread the word about what we were doing in Chicagoland. Water features were a hot, new trend; the economy was burning up; and contractors and retailers were eager to learn all that we could teach them about building, selling and retailing water features.



more than three months later, we gave in to his insistent nagging and assigned him to work outside with his hands. Twenty-one years later, Brian is our second-longest tenured employee and now heads our Chicagoland research and development team.



Brian Helfrich

## Coping with Competition

The decade from 1996 to 2006 represented double-digit growth every year for

1996



A four-time winner of Inc. magazine's 500 Fastest-Growing Privately-Held Companies in America. Aquascape and landed our company in the Inc. magazine list of the 500 fastest-growing, privately-held companies four years

In the summer of 1995, catalog orders were streaming in, and we hired our first full-time warehouse employee. Brian Helfrich, a red-headed, freckle-faced kid right out of high school, came walking through our doors for the first time. No



in a row. But with our rapid growth came an equal amount of discord. Our success spawned a growing number of competitors who entered the market and tried to replicate what we were doing.

Furthermore, my father and I couldn't agree on the direction to take the business. I bought out his share of the company,



Here's the team in 1995 in our first real office. (Left to right: my mother Lauri, my father Gary, our secretary Jen, Ed Beaulieu, me and Brian Helfrich)

and he created Pondsweep Manufacturing, which would become Aquascape's first direct competitor. A few of our distributors soon followed suit, setting up competing operations. Eventually even some of our customers, enticed by this expanding marketplace, created their own competing businesses. It can be said that imitation is the greatest form of flattery, but for all the success Aquascape was having, I was learning the very painful lessons that often go hand-in-hand with a business's growth.

Nothing, however, could prepare me for the rug being pulled out from underneath me when the recession hit in 2008. We hit a sales peak of \$59.4 million in 2007 but dropped a whopping \$12 million the following year. Like a lot of the rest of the world, I was thinking, "What the hell just happened?"

The next few years were the most challenging, but they were surprisingly rewarding, as our team struggled to right-size the

ship. With the clear edict from our then-CFO Colleen Heitzler to reduce expenses, we painfully trimmed our payroll from a peak of 195 people to just more than 100. We also invested heavily in the innovation



Colleen Heitzler



Scott Rhodes

of smaller water feature products, consumables such as water treatments and items like fish food that could be utilized in existing water features. Scott Rhodes, our then-director of product marketing, analyzed every product we made, with the goal to maximize the value of each in the marketplace. From design and warranty to packaging and price point, everything we sold was analyzed against the criterion of being the best overall value for our customers — and ultimately the end users. Our efforts paid off, and we were able to turn the corner and begin growing sales again.



From February 2011: We were standing with our management team on Aqualand's covered parking structure, which was on the ground, collapsed by two feet of snow.

## The Fall of Aqualand

Then, just when things started looking up, everything literally came tumbling down. On Feb. 11, 2011, my vision for a workplace utopia, Aqualand, collapsed under the weight of a near-record snowfall.

It's been said that life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent what you do about it. It's also been said that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. What our team did — operating out of three different facilities in three different towns while rebuilding Aqualand over the next 10 months — was nothing short of transformational for me.

As I continued to focus my efforts externally on selling water features to contractors and retailers, Colleen Heitzler, now the president of Aquascape, led the day-to-day operations of the management team. The rewarding part for me came from my hard-earned, newfound love for our team and the greater industry as a whole. I will never again take for granted the importance of what we do and the honor I feel doing it with such quality people.

For that reason, the building collapse coming on the heels of hopefully the worst recession of our lifetime actually became

2011

the single greatest defining event for me in our company's evolution. Having survived the worst blow conceivable with the economic downturn and the collapse of our building only to come out stronger on the other side has made me confident that our team can survive whatever challenges lie ahead.

## The Aquascape Foundation

What's happening today is a direct reflection of the factors that have shaped us. Through the entire experience of rebuilding our sales and eventually our building, we stayed true to our company's core values, especially philanthropy. Starting in 2009, the Aquascape Foundation, the brainchild of my wife Carla, traveled annually to install Aquascape rainwater harvesting technology in third-world countries. Over the past seven years, we have never had a



shortage of certified Aquascape contractors willing, eager and able to lend a hand, regardless of their own business struggles.

Our world has changed in profound ways that I could have never perceived a scant decade ago. Aquascape is embracing that change and doing what it takes to help the industry grow again.

## New Opportunities with New Technology

With so many ponds in the ground, there's a huge market in simply upgrading existing water features that are already out there. As a passionate, hobbyist-led company, we are all very much focused on improving the consumer experience with water features. As such, we've been able to innovate many new products, like an automatic water treatment dosing system and ionizer units that reduce a consumer's need for maintenance, while expanding the opportunities for the contractors and retailers we serve.

Despite our success in achieving new growth through servicing existing water features, the thing we are most excited about is creating a new demand for new water features. Nowhere else is the opportunity greater than through the use of new technology. Long gone are the days of

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Pondemonium is held every August in Chicago and is the largest gathering of water feature professionals in the world.

Aquascape printing millions of catalogs and distributing them through the U.S. Postal Service. Starting with the fall 2014 premiere of "Pond Stars" on Nat Geo Wild, our marketing efforts have been laser-focused on growing consumer awareness and the demand for water features worldwide. We are now exporting our American-made products around the world, including

2014



our newest marketplace, China. In the beginning of this year, Aquascape completed its largest project to date, a \$2.3 million water feature for a "Pond Stars" fan at his new shopping mall in Villavicencio, Colombia, led by

none other than our director of field research and Aquascape's longest-serving teammate, Ed Beaulieu.

With more options than ever to spread the great news of the water feature lifestyle among professionals and consumers alike, I feel like a kid with a key to the candy store! That's both the opportunity and the problem we face today. Aquascape's digital media department is working nonstop just trying to keep up with our constantly connected world. Our library now consists of a couple hundred videos with more than 10 million YouTube views and countless more views on social media. We just completed the construction of an in-house studio and soon will be able to generate multiple inspirational and educational videos each week. With water features, it's hard to beat a medium like video for getting the good word out there. And as hobbyists ourselves, getting the right word out there is a

gift that technology finally allows us to share. With more than 60,000 fans alone on the Aquascape Facebook page and the ability to constantly update content, distributing a cohesive message to a growing online audience is easier than ever.



Our in-house video studio

By promoting our motto, "Ponds Done Right, Customers Served Right," we are able to support all of our contractor and retail customers by growing consumer awareness, and ultimately, the demand for

water features. The internet is a bold, new world of marketing and consumer power, where 40 percent of all consumers start their product searches, and the rate is growing. Being front and center

2016

with quality content online is the future of marketing. As the only full-line aquatic products manufacturer in the world with a construction, retail and maintenance division, we have an endless supply of pertinent

information and a passion to get it out there to the masses.

### A Quarter-Century in the Books

For many people, 25 years would be a good career. For me, it feels like I'm just at



The Aquascape management team that leads our staff of 110 teammates. Company dogs Buckeye and Balto just relax all day.

halftime. I can't wait to get the second half started! Ushering in the next growth phase is what I feel the first 25 years has prepared

our company and team for.

For the next chapter of this story, one thing's for certain. We are a lot smarter and, in particular, stronger because of what we've collectively gone through as a company and an industry. As wonderful as it was to experience double-digit growth over the first 16 years in business, you don't know what you're made of until you've survived a downturn. You also don't know what you've got until you're about to lose it.

"The definition of hell is a life without problems," they say. That's all business is — fixing problems. The bigger the challenge, though, the bigger the opportunity. I'm blessed to have the opportunity to make the world better for the stakeholders we support in this industry. It's a gift I will never take for granted again. ☘

### About the Author

Also known as The Pond Guy, **Greg Wittstock** is the founder and CEO of Aquascape Inc., the leading manufacturer in the water features market. Since its inception in 1991, Aquascape Inc. has experienced incredible growth, appearing on Inc. magazine's list of 500 Fastest-Growing, Privately Held Companies in North America four years in a row (1999-2002). Greg himself appeared on the cover of Inc. magazine in 2003, along with a feature article about his leadership and entrepreneurial spirit.





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Monetizing Maintenance

**Don't overlook this bottom-line boost**

by **Alexander Castro**,  
Tranquil WaterScapes Inc.

10 ponds each year, you've gained 10 potential maintenance clients. Take that humble number and multiply it by the number of years you've been in business. Now, do I have your attention?

**Why Maintenance?**

For many pond builders, there is a simple answer: to better serve your clients. For others, the answer may seem a bit harsh: to better improve your knowledge and skill set. I will be the first to admit that without our maintenance services, we would not be where we are today regarding our construction methodology and standards. What has taught us right from wrong has not been simply following steps from A to Z in a build. Instead, our lessons have come from trying to follow building practices that didn't

Pond maintenance is often overlooked as a revenue stream for pond builders and water feature specialists. The landscape industry as a whole is a \$77 billion industry in the United States, and while ponds are a small segment of the industry, this figure still shows how large the opportunity can be for pond services. With professional pond construction at the forefront of the market share within our own industry, why are we, the pond professionals, not taking advantage of follow-up maintenance? Too often during industry gatherings, I hear story after story about slow work and cash flow issues. Stop and think: If you build or retrofit

fit a specific client's needs, and then realizing we needed to make adjustments to suit that client. Even more educating over the years has been retrofitting other professional ponds that didn't suit a specific client or their ultimate goals. The term "pond" means a lot of different things to different people. In such a vast industry, learning is often seeing — and in the case of this article, service is education!

### What Do I Need?

Maintenance is a simple, add-on service for most pond contracting companies. To start, all you need is a calendar and devotion to a consistent schedule. In the beginning, we only performed maintenance on Fridays. This allowed me to share my initial investment with pond construction, my main revenue stream. Our main focus was to grow

our maintenance division through the construction division. For each pond we built, we provided that client with the option of a maintenance program. This was a beneficial way to simultaneously provide a better service to our clients and monitor our construction techniques, making changes to new designs when needed. The continuing revenue stream was an added bonus!

### Know Your Construction

Construction makes growing a maintenance service easy, and in turn,

### What's on the Truck?

Here are some items we keep in our maintenance trucks. While this works for us, make sure you tailor this list to fit your specific needs.

- Water Parameter Test Kit
- Extendable Net Poles (2)
- Pool-style Nets (4 to 5)
- Plant Trimmers
- Lily Tab Feeders
- Hand Tools (screwdrivers, channel locks, pipe straps, etc.)
- Extension Cord (50-foot)
- Hose (50-foot)
- Electric Power Washer (small)
- Hand Brush
- Pool Brush (wire)
- Bacteria
- Rock Cleaner
- Water Conditioner
- Algaecide/ Fountain Treatments
- Pond Salt
- Fertilizer Tabs
- Liquid Barley
- Miscellaneous PVC Fittings
- Spare Autofills
- Spare Pond Light Bulbs
- Spare Filter Pads (Bulk)
- Waders
- Tool Sanitizing Spray or Dips

These are some basics. The list seems large, but these items are easily kept in a small pickup bed with room to spare.



A stocked truck is ready to go. Having all the necessities handy is a prerequisite to a productive day.

maintenance services make for better pond builders. All pond contractors have their own personal ponds, right? Of course, we do. And our personal ponds are exactly the same as all our client ponds, right?

### Clearly, the Answer is No.

All pond builds are unique, and all pond locations are different. What better way to hone your skills than to understand the vast differences between ponds? Increasing your knowledge of what works best in every situation is easily achieved by having consistent monthly contact with your builds. This increases the quality of knowledge you can spread to existing or potential clients. After all, your conversations with your clients typically consist of knowledge gained from experience.

At the end of the day, if you only build ponds, your only maintenance experience comes from what you perform on your personal pond. We started our maintenance division as a way to boost cash flow during

slow construction seasons. In South Florida, that's a small window of time. What we ultimately realized is that our maintenance practices made us better pond builders by



keeping us from making the same mistakes twice. For instance, past experience has taught us when to use two skimmers instead of one, or when a pressurized filter is more beneficial than a waterfall filter, and so on.

Another added advantage is that our maintenance division often calls to atten-

tion any issues in design and construction. This allows for a resolve before the client ever has an opportunity to know something was planned incorrectly. By being proactive,

your maintenance crew can help your reputation grow and save your profit margin at the same time.

### Organization Is Profitability

In maintenance, organization is just as important — if not more important —

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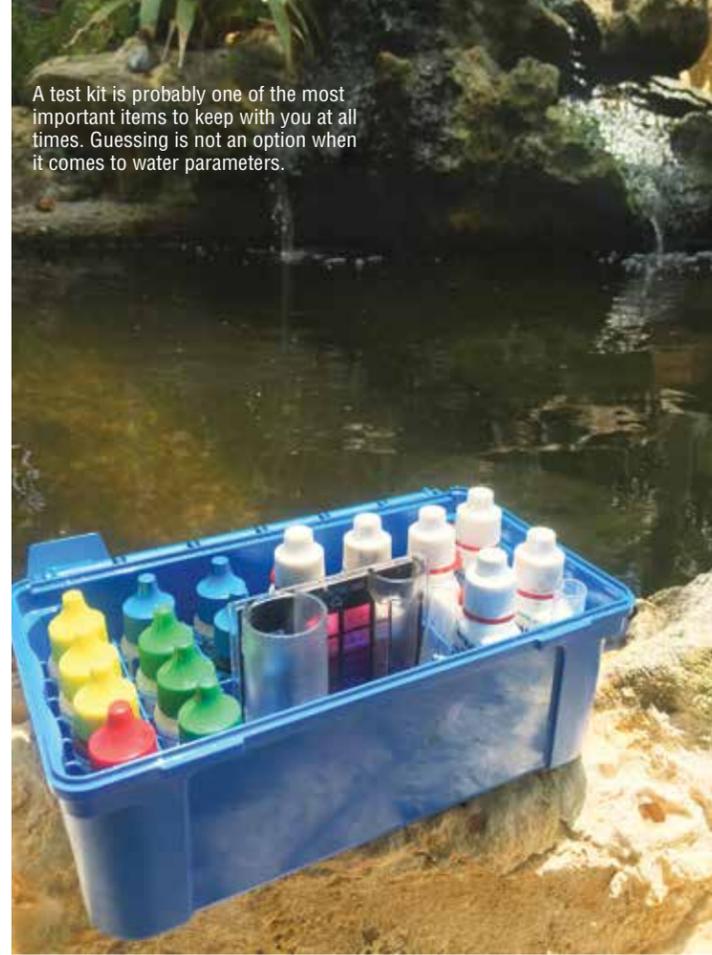
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A test kit is probably one of the most important items to keep with you at all times. Guessing is not an option when it comes to water parameters.



than a well-planned route. Remember, time is money. The last thing you want to do is waste time making stops, picking up materials or running back to the shop to retrieve forgotten or needed tools. Be sure to choose a maintenance vehicle that provides ample space for supplies, tools, vacuums, nets and so forth. If you are fortunate enough to have multiple crew trucks, having similar vehicles with the same tools and supplies will allow crews to provide your clients with consistent service. This will also allow your maintenance staff to be able to jump into any of your trucks and perform their duties with efficiency. Everyone wins with a consistent maintenance model.

In some cases, you may

have to set up a truck and crew to specialize in certain types of maintenance, such as fountains, pondless waterfalls or chlorinated features. That particular truck can have those items needed to perform this specific type of maintenance, in addition to the regular supplies on the other maintenance trucks.

### A Simple Addition

In our fleet, we have a dedicated service truck that serves our maintenance division. This truck is larger than our regular maintenance vehicles and carries more repair and replacement parts than the others.

Again, this keeps both crews profitable by keeping fittings and supplies readily available. Our service crew gives us an opportunity to accommodate

clients who may not desire regular maintenance but do require service visits from time to time. Sometimes they just need an extra hand when it comes to replacing UV bulbs or a light fixture. This crew also handles leak

**Don't have a pond store? Add a maintenance route. In today's age of expediency, nothing is more convenient than a readily available product. Your maintenance trucks can serve as a rolling store for your clients.**

detections, retrofits to filtration and annual clean-outs. I won't go into any details when it comes to clean-outs, startups or closings — however, all these services are easy add-ons to maintenance divisions and allow for a longer, dedicated construction season in some areas of the country.

### Your Own Rolling Store

Don't have a pond store? Add a maintenance route. In today's age of expediency, nothing is more convenient than a readily available product. Your maintenance trucks can serve as a rolling store for your clients. We keep billable goods like koi and goldfish food, water conditioner, bacteria and fertilizer tabs in all of our maintenance trucks. This increases the opportunity to make a sale while simultaneously providing service beyond what Amazon.com and the rest of the internet can provide.

For example, if your client has a waterfall that you service once a month, you may typically use rock cleaner to scrub away unwanted buildup or algae. If the client is constantly thanking you for your exceptional waterfall cleaning but wishing they could do something between visits, this is the type of client that would benefit from a sale of rock cleaner. This is a win-win. Your client can now handle the interim maintenance, and your maintenance division profits with minimal effort. After all, you already buy rock cleaner and other maintenance products to use during your service, so why not make a little extra selling the product as well?



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## Get the Word Out!

How much money do you spend on advertising per year? Does your current marketing strategy allow you to reach your target audience? Let's face it. Our clients are a growing part of the landscape industry, but what form of marketing makes it easiest to reach the highest number of potential clients? Imagine the volume of potential clients on your local roads and highways daily. Now think of all the hours your maintenance and service trucks spend traveling from one client's pond to another. A well-planned monthly marketing strategy is greatly increased by the addition of a pond maintenance route. This is up to 10 times more effective than a well-planned monthly strategy for a company that only provides construction services. Make the most of your advertising budget by painting or covering

your company trucks — especially the maintenance and service trucks. These cover the most ground daily and serve as your mobile billboards.

## Cash Flow: The Ultimate Benefit

The foundation of a profitable business model is cash flow. Unlike construction services, which fluctuate from project to project, maintenance services represent consistent, predictable revenues from month to month and will help a company better plan its stability and project its growth or expansion. In simple terms, it reduces the stress of worrying what next month will bring and allows a business to work on the important tasks at hand. This helps grow our business and enables our clients to live the "Pond Life."

After all, every day in South Florida we are bringing water to life. 

## About the Author

**Alexander Castro** is the president and founder of Tranquil Waterscapes Inc. and Koi Smart Pond Supply LLC, both located in West Palm Beach, Florida. He has a love for all things nature and is extremely passionate about his businesses and the industry that he has immersed himself in.



Alex has 12 years of experience in the water feature industry. He serves as the lead designer and creative director at Tranquil Waterscapes, which designs, constructs and maintains all aquatic environments. He has successfully led many projects, leaving an everlasting mark on each of them and doing what he is most passionate about: bringing water to life.

He created Koi Smart Pond Supply LLC to provide all types of pond enthusiasts, from do-it-yourself to professional contractors, with quality products and sound advice for all types of pond-related projects.

Passion, knowledge and hard work have helped him lay the foundation of his success. At the end of the day, Alex is honored to be a part of an industry that has a piece of his heart. The rest of his heart belongs to his daughter, his wife, fishing and the Bahamas.

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This 50-foot pondless waterfall graces the backyard of the dream home.

| Cover Story |

# The Pond Hero

## Reality TV introduces the **Pond Guy of the South**

by **Lora Lee Gelles**,  
POND Trade magazine

I received an email a few weeks ago from Blake Mullins, the consulting producer of a reality television show called “Home Free” on Fox. Its second season, which is hosted by professional contractor Mike Holmes and former NFL player Tim Tebow, began airing in June.

Blake took a particular interest in one of the contractors, Tommy Hill of Serenity Falls Watergardens & Landscaping, and invited me to journey down to the set in Dallas, Georgia, to meet Tommy and shoot some photos. He didn’t have to ask

me twice — I was on a plane bound for Georgia a few days later!

### Reality Check

Fox had originally sent Blake to the Atlanta Home Show in January to scout out landscapers for the show. But as fate would have it, it was a little early in the Atlanta landscap-

ing season, so Tommy’s eye-catching display was one of the only garden-based exhibits at the show. Naturally, Blake’s interest quickly turned to ponds and water features. A long conversation led to an exchange of business cards and an exciting proposal to appear on a Fox show.

“I didn’t believe it at all,” Tommy admitted.

But fast-forward four months, and Blake was back in Georgia with a team of designers and architects to discuss the network’s opportunity. After going over the premise of the show and various drawings, the Fox team asked Tommy to build a water feature for one of the houses featured in the upcoming season of “Home Free.”



Two single basalt columns (left) were constructed in the contestants’ common area, and a triple-basalt feature (middle and right) graced the first house’s yard.



The scope of work was expanded a bit during contract negotiations, and Fox soon agreed to terms with Tommy to create a total of five water features for the show's upcoming season.

### "The Pond Guy of the South"

Unlike many high-profile network television contracts, Tommy's did not include a hefty payday. Instead, Fox offered to compensate him with a host of marketing benefits, including showcasing his

company's logo on television, the Fox website and the show's Facebook page. He was also given access to the professional video footage and photos from the show's photographers, in addition to the rights to use the show's logo on his truck. Fox also notified its local news affiliates that "The Pond Guy of the South" would appear on the show, which resulted in a boost of publicity in Snellville and the metro-Atlanta area.

With everything in place, Tommy shared his ideas with the production team, which

Aqua Bella Design bubbling urns (left) added a touch of luxury to the second house. Workers installed a triple basalt feature (middle) at the first house. The pièce de résistance (right), the pondless feature at the dream house, leads down to the end of the stream.

began matching products from Aqua Bella Designs and Blue Thumb with the different styles of houses selected for the show. As it turned out, the show's Hollywood taste didn't always jive with Tommy's pro-bono budget, so Tommy had to rely on his creativity and expertise to keep the project feasible. At the

end of the day, he estimates he donated between \$45,000 and \$50,000 of labor and materials to complete all five water features for the series.

Tommy is no stranger to doing business this way. Every year, he donates a free water feature for a worthwhile cause. Past recipients include the Snellville Veterans Memorial and Amy Copeland, a Georgia woman who lost her limbs in a zip lining accident. His charity work has appeared in national news outlets, including "Good Morning America."

"I believe in marketing," Tommy said. "You've got to think outside the box. By doing little stuff, I'm giving back to something I believe in."

### A Wish Come True

Although he didn't realize it at first, Tommy would meet yet another recipient of one of his free water features during the filming of the show. All it would require was intercepting Tim Tebow.

Through the Make-A-Wish foundation, Justin, a terminally ill youth, got to meet his hero, co-host Tebow, on set while "Home Free" was in production. But in the end it was Tommy — and his ride — who actually stole the young man's heart.

Justin first approached Tommy for an autograph after taking a liking to "The Pond Guy" painted on the side of his monster truck. Sensing the young man's enthusiasm, Tommy knowingly asked him if he had ever driven a truck before. A few miles riding shotgun with Justin behind the wheel in an open field was all it took to spawn a new friendship.

Afterward, Tommy offered to build Justin's family a pondless waterfall at their home. Some joyful tears and a few weeks later, the waterfall — not meeting Tebow — is practically all Justin raves about.

Aqua Bella Designs bubbling urns are a beautiful focal point in front of the third home.



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The "Home Free" set, where you can see all the homes on the street.

## On the Set of "Home Free"

This is the second season of Fox's "Home Free," but this year the competition has taken on a brand new twist. Eleven contestants will compete to win a home for a hero in their lives, with one contestant facing elimination each week. The last contestant standing wins \$100,000 and the grand prize "dream home" for a hero of his or her choice.

The gist of the show is, how far are you willing to go for the hero in your life? Would you live on-set with your fellow competitors and work grueling, 12-hour days? Would you push yourself to learn how to construct a home, even if you've never used a hammer or saw in your life? The contestants live together and compete with each other, at times bonding and at other times getting in each other's faces. But hey, that makes for a great show!

In a surprise twist, the contestants are told during the first episode that they aren't building just one home — they're building a whole neighborhood of homes.

Throughout the season, the contestants must face a wide variety of exciting tasks, including "Drill-Down Challenges" in an American Ninja Warrior-style arena. Their 12-hour days consist of all sorts of construction-related duties, such as drywalling,

mudding, siding, painting and installing irrigation. Most of the contestants know nothing about building or construction. The host of the show, Mike Holmes, dishes out "work orders" and some expert advice along the way.

I spent time on the set with the show's consulting producer, Blake Mullins, who was gracious enough to take me behind the scenes and let me hang out with the crew. I got a full tour of not only the water features, but also each of the stunning homes for the heroes. An incredible amount of work goes on around the clock to have the each of the homes completed in less than 72 hours. Each home is progressively nicer than the previous one as you go down the block.

Every contestant and his or her heroes are winners on "Home Free." The grand prize "dream house" goes to the contestant that dukes it out and makes it all the way to the end. That's where Tommy's pondless waterfall with the "wow factor" comes in.

Be sure to tune in and watch. The show started airing June 16, but there's still time to catch up. Tune in Thursday nights at 9 p.m. EDT (8 p.m. CDT) on Fox. I'm sure the homeowner is going to be blown away by the pondless on the final show!



Tim Tebow and Mike Holmes with Tommy, "The Pond Guy of the South" and his family.

## Nine Days, Five Features

Not every moment on set was a walk in the park. Tommy and his crew — two and, at times, three people — underwent a nine-day marathon that included a daily, four-hour round-trip commute in order to build all the features. They built a beautiful structure with two single basalt column features as an added luxury to the contestants' living quarters. For the first house, they installed a triple basalt column feature. A second house featured a custom-made, two-tiered fire rock with water streaming from underneath, and Aqua Bella Design bubbling urns graced the yard of a third house.

The masterpiece, however, was saved for the show's dream house. Tommy's team arrived expecting to build a 15-foot pondless waterfall, but when the gazebo contractor backed out, the project instantly expanded to a 50-foot pondless work of art. Tommy stayed on-site for the duration of its construction, which totaled 44 hours of work over just three days. Luckily, he had enough liner on hand!

What he didn't have, however, was the comfort of a normal course of business. Instead of going through the typical bidding process for a job, Tommy was subject to the rules of a reality television show, with a strict time frame and little regard for material and labor availability. Furthermore, he had to work simultaneously with all the other contractors



Tommy Hill (left) and consulting producer Blake Mullins (right) hanging by the pondless.



The waterfall looks lovely all lit up.

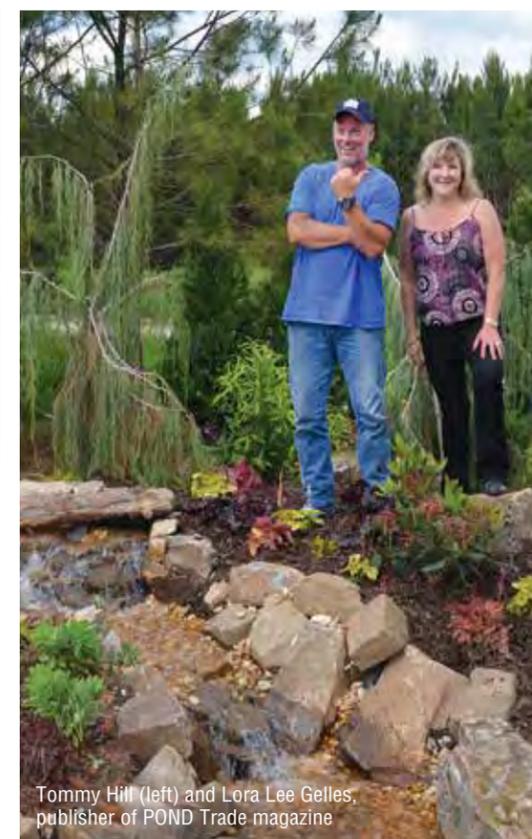
who were solely focused on their own jobs. The show's support staff was helpful in fulfilling his needs, but there was an unavoidable "hurry-up-and-wait" mentality as the show went on.

## Always a Soldier

Tommy considers his work on the show a learning experience that brought him back to his days in the armed forces.

"I was able to test my time management," Tommy said. "But I also was able to see the weaknesses in my guys. I could see how far and how hard I could push them ... like a soldier pushes his troops."

When pressed about whether or not he would go through the process again, he did not hesitate in saying yes, especially considering the fact that a deserving homeowner would be the recipient of his work. Although



Tommy Hill (left) and Lora Lee Gelles, publisher of POND Trade magazine

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Here's the view of the pondless water feature from the inside of the home. The large slider door really allows for a special view.

he was not paid for the construction of his work, he said it was still rewarding to know that his manufacturers and distributors believed in him enough to support him on such an unusual project.

"I have to give 100 percent thanks — and I could not have done it without them — to Pond Builder," he continued. "If it were not for those guys, I don't think this would've been possible."

Monrovia provided all plants and shrubs, and Stovall & Company contributed rocks, gravel and mulch.

Tommy stressed that although water features are not a necessity for a home in the way that electrical and plumbing work are essential, it's still a special bonus.

"That was the key," he said. "Doing this show is not only going to benefit me. It's going to benefit everybody out there in the water garden industry. People will say, 'Hey! I saw this on Home Free — can you get me something like this?'"

The production of season two has wrapped up, and although mum's the word on which contestant won the dream home, Blake still raves about Tommy's contributions to the show.

"When we look at this, we see Tommy in here at all hours of the night, cranking away with his amazing commitment to get this thing done," Blake said. "Tommy, being the military guy he is, when he starts something, he's going all the way until it's done." ☞

*Tommy Hill began doing water features more than 18 years ago. He started a full landscape company and soon changed the company to strictly water features. He found that creating beautiful water features was all he wanted to do. His company has been involved with some prestige builds in North America, such as the International Flower and Garden build at EPCOT Center, and has built water features for Richard Petty, the Omaha Nebraska Zoo, Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Pike Nurseries in Georgia and many more. Tommy has won many awards for his water features.*

*Tommy has been a Certified Aquascape Contractor (CAC) and a Certified Installer of Pond Builder, a line of water feature system. He has written articles for pond and koi magazines*



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and has been featured numerous times on television and radio. With years of experience building more than 1,000 water features, he knows how to bring serenity to people's lives and property by building water features for others as if they were his own. [www.serenityfallswatergardens.com](http://www.serenityfallswatergardens.com)

### About the Author

**Lora Lee Gelles** has over 25 years of experience in publishing. She purchased POND Trade in 2013 and has been thrilled with her decision ever since. She spends many hours in her garden and has been featured on garden walks. There is now a pond amid the flowers. You never knew how much you would enjoy a pond until you have one. She lives in the Chicagoland area and her only regret is not being able to enjoy her garden and pond year-round!



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Be Prepared



# Weathering the STORM

Prepare today to survive tomorrow's downturn

by Michael Stone,  
Markup & Profit

For many contractors, business is good, or at least far better than it was several years ago. When things are good, it's smart to ask yourself a critical

question: Are you prepared for the next downturn?

It's a given that we have up and down cycles in this industry and in the economy in general. The last down cycle that began in the United States in 2008 took out many construction-related

businesses because they weren't prepared. They took things for granted; they assumed leads would always be there because they had more leads than they could handle. They assumed cash flow wouldn't be a problem because they always had cash flowing through their business.

I want to thank Mark Buckshon for reminding me of this truth back in February. His article, "Panic, carnage and patience: Steps to take to manage and win with risk and reward in business and marketing" listed four basic guidelines you should be following now to survive the next downturn.

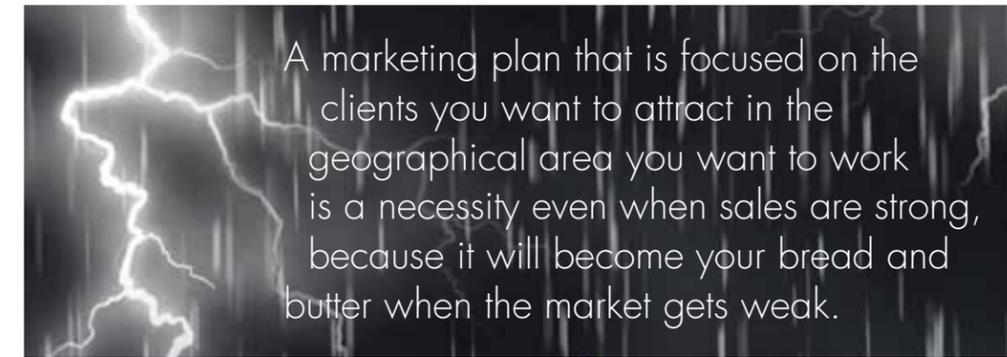
"Separate your personal and business affairs sufficiently that your business failure won't pull you down personally."

"You don't want to lose your house because the bank takes it when your business fails. (This touches on how big a mortgage to allow and whether you personally have secured your business debt. It also may relate to local or state rules. There is a reason many very wealthy and shady individuals keep their primary residence in Florida — because of that state's homesteading rules.)"

You might think this doesn't apply to you because you'll make sure your business doesn't fail, but not every business failure is the direct fault of the owner. Many

subcontractors lost money and their businesses not because of their own bad decisions, but because they couldn't get paid by the general contractor. Others were pushed into bankruptcy because of homeowner

just so you can eat. If you have a good marketing program to generate leads and you constantly develop and tune it, you will survive hard times. Of course, you must watch what is going on around you



A marketing plan that is focused on the clients you want to attract in the geographical area you want to work is a necessity even when sales are strong, because it will become your bread and butter when the market gets weak.

disputes. Stuff happens. Protect yourself.

"Never stop marketing. And develop a systematic, thoughtful approach to your marketing, and stick to it."

If you are consistently marketing 24/7, you should have enough business that a small bump won't force you to take a job

and adjust as conditions dictate.

Depending on referrals isn't a marketing plan. Referrals are great, but when the economy heads south, referrals tend to dry up. Many of the construction-related businesses that failed years ago depended on referrals to generate leads. When referrals



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dwindled, they didn't have enough cash to start marketing and they didn't have enough time to wait for results.

A marketing plan that is focused on the clients you want to attract in the geograph-

ically flowing out the door. Don't fiddle around; if and when you see problems in your business, make decisions. If you think things might improve, set a date where you'll act if it hasn't improved. Don't let problems

they are building their companies instead of paying off debt.

An OCRA isn't a line of credit, because it's your funds you are using. When you use a line of credit, the bank is making money off you with the interest you owe. Instead, set aside that "interest" so that down the road you'll have the funds you need without asking for help from the bank.

"Better three hours too soon than a minute too late." — William Shakespeare

### About the Author

Michael Stone has used his

experience to help thousands of general contractors, new home builders, remodelers and specialty contractors build stronger, more profitable businesses.

Michael is the author of "Markup & Profit; A Contractor's Guide Revisited" and "Profitable Sales, A Contractor's Guide" and has taught business management, sales and estimating classes. Michael also provides coaching and consulting services. He has an entire section of his blog focused on employee issues. You can find it at [www.markupandprofit.com/blog/employee-issues](http://www.markupandprofit.com/blog/employee-issues).



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Don't fiddle around; if and when you see problems in your business, make decisions. If you think things might improve, set a date where you'll act if it hasn't improved. Don't let problems continue to drag your business down.

ical area you want to work is a necessity even when sales are strong, because it will become your bread and butter when the market gets weak.

"Be ready to face the hard decisions quickly, before it is too late."

There are two aspects to this. The first is that you need to know your numbers. If you do job costing and have a clean and clear Profit and Loss statement that you review and understand on a regular basis, you'll be better able to see what's coming. Do you have the right number of employees for your volume? Are you making smart purchasing decisions? Are you paying yourself too much money for your volume?

The second is facing those hard decisions when they need to be made. It's far easier to hope that things will get better, but while you spend time hoping, cash keeps

continue to drag your business down.

"Ideally, put yourself in a place where you don't need to panic or stress. Then you can catch the upswing and opportunities when they arise."

The best way to do this is to have an Operating Capital Reserve Account (OCRA). You can also call it savings: funds your business can fall back on if and when money gets tight. Set a goal for the account, reach that goal, then don't touch the funds.

An OCRA will eliminate some of the stress you'll have when you see things tightening down. It buys you time to make the adjustments necessary to get through. Many of our coaching clients who had an OCRA in place in late 2008 and early 2009 made it through the downturn and are still in business today. They also didn't have to go into debt to survive, which means that today

## Trade News

### Eco-Twist Pump - PXX Line

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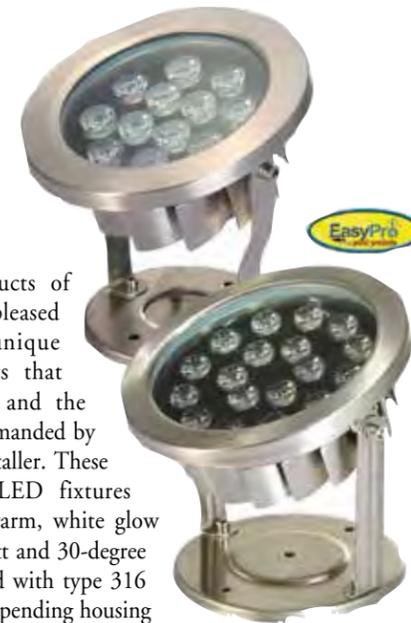
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### LED Pond Lights are Soaring in Popularity: EasyPro Presents Two New Stainless Models

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### Kasco Marine Welcomes Hilary Simonson

Kasco Marine Inc. is pleased to announce the addition of Hilary Simonson to its in-house marketing team. Hilary joins the team as Kasco's expanding product line and brand strategy are in rapid growth mode.



"I am excited to be a part of Kasco. I look forward to working with the team to further develop their already great brand reputation, and I feel fortunate to be joining such a well-respected company that prides itself on top-quality service," she said. A seasoned marketing strategist, Hilary brings a broad range of experience to the company with over a decade of success in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer companies,

including United Healthcare, General Mills and Best Buy.

In her time away from the office, Hilary can be found volunteering for a variety of animal rescue organizations and spending time with her own rescued dogs and cats.

### Aquascape Inc. Announces New Signature Series™ Pond Skimmers

Aquascape proudly announces the launch of its new line of Signature Series™ Pond Skimmers available in three sizes: 200, 400 and 1000. Pond skimmers effectively remove leaves and debris from ponds, acting as a pre-filter to reduce pump maintenance.



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After World War II, Little Giant purchased an aluminum die-casting machine and started taking on die-casting contractor work to further increase sales and personnel expertise. By 1950, this expertise had grown so much that the company was able to develop and manufacture an upgraded Little Giant Vaporizer Pump that could be used anywhere water recirculation was a problem. This basic, self-contained electric motor-driven submersible pump was a small low-pressure, high-volume pump that was used specifically for the recirculation of water for evaporative coolers, minnow tanks, home garden pools and fountains, light coolant oils for machine tools, laboratories and many other water transfer applications.

In 1954, the development of the Little Giant C2 and C3 pumps signaled the company's true entrance into the condensate pump business. In 1960, the company reorganized and changed its name to Little Giant Corporation, expanding its focus to battery chargers and steam cleaning machines that were later sold so the company could focus completely on water pumping. Over the next 20 years, the company continued to build its name around innovation with various products.

Little Giant was purchased by Franklin Electric, a leading global manufacturer of pumps, motors, drives and controls for residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial and municipal applications, in 2006. With the combined Franklin engineering and manufacturing teams, the Little Giant brand has continued its focus on providing innovative products that solve contractor challenges in the pumping industry. The Little Giant Outdoor Living product line includes a variety of pumps and accessories for decorative water, hydroponics, aquarium, pool and marine applications.

For more information on Little Giant wastewater products, visit [www.littlegiant.com](http://www.littlegiant.com).

### All-New Pond & Lake Aeration Cabinets from Atlantic

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### OASE North America Announces Regional Sales Manager Positions

OASE North America is looking for experienced candidates for the position of Regional Sales Manager for both the Southwest and Southeast United States regions. Each position will be responsible for securing new sales and expanding existing sales in their regions.

Duties include business development with distributor, chain and dealer accounts on our full line of products.

The ideal candidates should have three to five years' experience in the aquatics, pet, landscape or lawn & garden industry. He or she should have a Type A personality and be a self-starter with the ability to develop and execute customer solutions to meet the changing demand in the market.

Interested candidates can apply by submitting their resumes to Jessica Billeci at [j.billeci@oase-livingwater.com](mailto:j.billeci@oase-livingwater.com).

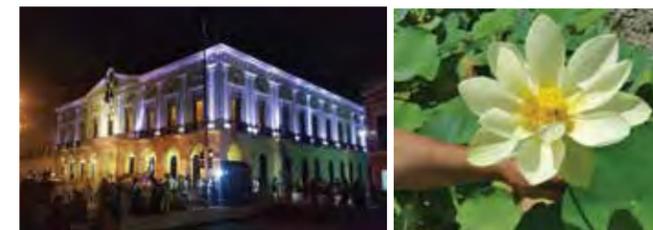


### IWGS 2016 Symposium

The 2016 International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society (IWGS) Symposium will convene in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico from October 25-28, 2016. Mérida, the White City of Yucatán, is one of the most illustrious colonial cities of Latin America. The capital of Yucatán State, Mérida was named the 2017 Cultural Capital of the Americas and the second-safest city in all of the Americas — proud to be renowned as the best place to raise a family in Mexico.

Mérida is an ideal site for the 2016 symposium, with its wealth of historical, cultural and natural attractions. Mérida boasts an unsurpassed number of beautifully preserved Mayan and Colonial historical sites, a gentle climate — typically around 86 degrees in late October with little chance of rain — and an abundance of fauna and flora. Where else in the world can you swim among native Nymphaea in an ancient cenote amid Mayan temples? Mérida is also easily accessible, both directly via its own international airport and the major international hub of Cancun.

For more info, go to [www.iwgs.org/iwgs-2016-symposium/](http://www.iwgs.org/iwgs-2016-symposium/)



### AST Launches New AST Endurance Filter

Aquaculture Systems Technologies (AST) is a world leader in mechanical filtration, biofiltration and water clarification technologies. AST designs filters that are engineered to minimize maintenance, energy usage and water loss. Recently they have launched the new AST Endurance™ filter as an advancement of their patented PolyGeysers® technology. The Endurance filter was invented by AST's Technical Director Dr. Ron Malone as a more affordable option for koi and home pond enthusiasts.

"This new product line was engineered to offer unique solutions to common challenges koi pond owners experience. We know that nobody wants to manually backwash their filtration systems. It's a messy, monotonous, time-consuming task," said Rick Malone, the managing director of AST. "Our new Endurance filter will automate the entire process with an elegant level of efficiency."

The expert engineers at AST continue to innovate and invent new products and technologies that will provide incredible value to a variety of industries and enthusiasts. The Endurance filter showcases a variety of improvements to the filter technologies you're familiar with, including:

- Automatic pneumatic backwash that enables the filter to operate for extended periods of time without intervention, saving time and labor;
- Air-powered backwash that eliminates the need for energy-demanding water pumps;
- Lowest water loss filter in the industry — less than 5 percent of traditional filters;
- Large sludge storage chamber that concentrates the sludge;
- Optional automatic sludge discharge making the filter virtually maintenance free;
- Optional UV light add-on to assure algae control even under warm-water conditions; and
- Small footprint and low-profile design.

For more information:  
[www.astfilters.com/endurance](http://www.astfilters.com/endurance)  
800/939-3659



### Super Bright LEDs Welcomes New Dusk-to-Dawn Sensor for LED Landscape Lighting Systems

Super Bright LEDs, a leading online retailer for LED lights, has recently added a new dusk-to-dawn sensor to their extensive line of landscape lighting accessories. The hassle-free, plug-and-play sensor is designed to save time and energy as well as prolong LED lifetime by automatically powering landscape lights on at dusk and off at dawn. No indoor wiring or switches are necessary. To further extend the life of LED landscape lights, a built-in timer allows for lights to remain on for two, four or six hours after dusk. Override options are also available for constant on-off and standard dusk-to-dawn functionality. The new sensor is designed to plug easily into Super Bright LEDs' line of GLUX landscape lights and can also be used in an existing landscape lighting system with their Male Pigtail Power Cable. A ground-mounting stake is included with the sensor.



Super Bright LEDs has been providing customers with 14 years of excellent service, expertise and quality LED technology. Independent test labs along with the knowledge base of trained experts and engineers allow them to provide dependable information and products. For more information about dusk-to-dawn sensors, LED lighting products or Super Bright LEDs, visit [www.superbrightleds.com](http://www.superbrightleds.com).

For more information:  
Max Zofness  
[Maxz@superbrightleds.com](mailto:Maxz@superbrightleds.com)

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