

PONDTRADE™

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LEVEL UP

Creative
designing to the
next degree p. 38



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A PURPOSE DRIVEN BUSINESS



FEATURES

8 Show and Sell POUND CONSTRUCTION

There are countless ways to land a sale these days, but as **Bobby Kenyon** explains, pond and water-feature displays can go a long way in showing your customer what is possible. Check out his impressive spillway exhibit, and you might become inspired to follow suit.

14 To Tree or Not to Tree

A little shade by the pond seems like a no-brainer in most climates. But, not surprisingly, there are multiple risks and rewards to planting trees by your pond. **Max Phelps** helps you decipher which types of trees might be best suited for your pond, as opposed to those that might cause headaches.

14

20 Clear Water, Healthy Koi LANGUAGE OF KOI

Crystal-clear water is a common goal of all pond owners. Enjoy **Levi Crouse's** how-to guide on getting your water as clean and eco-friendly as possible so that your koi can thrive. From pH balance to alkalinity to turbidity, all your bases are covered in this highly informative article.

29 The Geyser Adviser

Justin Titus hails from the City of Fountains — Kansas City. So, there's no one better than he to provide you with some key tips and techniques to support and maintain the fountains in your area. Though a fountain may not be considered a proper "pond," it can be a new, key, low-stress component of your business.

38 Level Up COVER STORY

As a designer, it's easy to get caught up in ambitiously creative endeavors that really show off your craft. But how do you exercise your creative juices while ensuring you still make a profit? **Jaak Harju** has some key strategies for designing to the next level while keeping an eye on your bottom line.

45 Mile-High Desert Digs

Kent Wallace has advised and consulted on many do-it-yourself projects in the past, but due to this customer's extreme attention to detail, this particular project is one of the best he's ever overseen. Read about this winterized Nevada desert oasis and check out the stunning end result.

50 Spill It!

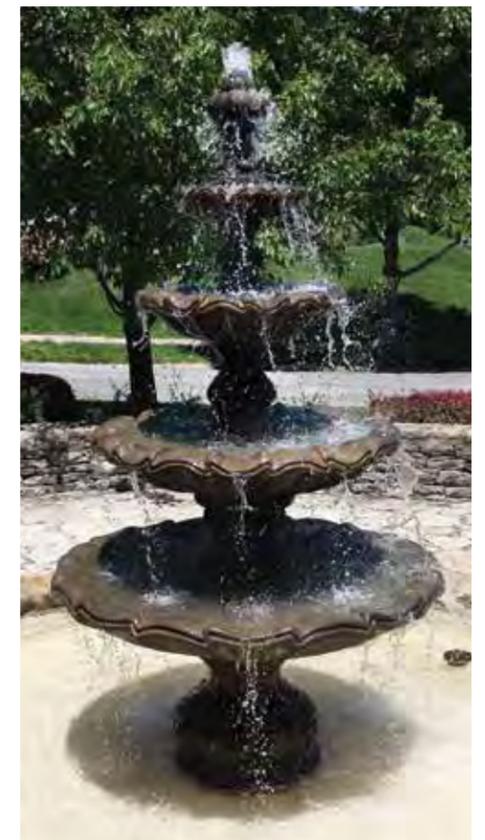
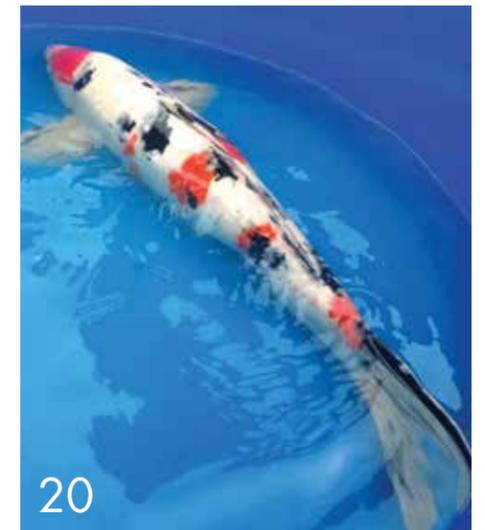
Spillways, bowls and patio ponds — no doubt you've seen the impact these can have on a landscape or waterscape, but did you know how simple they can be to install and maintain? Check out **Chris Ostrander's** gallery of these dynamic features and his tips for integrating them into almost any scene.

57 Go Sell it on the Mountain

Earlier this year, POND Trade's own **Lora Lee Gelles** was invited to the Mountain Top Marketing Mastermind Seminar in Colorado. As she explains in her recap, this was not your everyday gathering of marketing professionals. Discover the ways and philosophy behind the Contractor's Sales Academy.

60 Taxation Without Frustration

Tax season might be behind us, but the implications of our financial decisions affect our lives year-round. Our tax expert, **Mark Battersby**, provides some detailed advice about what constitutes "reasonable" executive compensation and could help save you some headaches the next time Uncle Sam reaches out.



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Upcoming Events

2017

July 24 - 26

SuperZoo 2017

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

July 28 - 30

**Tri-State ZNA Koi Club Show
and Bonsai Exhibit**

Snug Harbor Cultural Arts Center
and Botanic Garden
Staten Island, New York
www.tristatezna.com

August 9 - 11

IWGS Symposium

Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania
www.iwgs.org

August 15 - 17

IGC Chicago

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

August 23 - 26

Pondemonium

Q Center
St. Charles, Illinois
www.pondemonium.com

October 17 - 18

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

October 18 - 20

Hardscapes / GIE+EXPO 2017

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

October 29 - November 3

International Pool | Spa | Patio Expo

Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida
www.poolspapatio.com

November 8 - 9

Irrigation Show

Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida
www.irrigationshow.com

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PONDTRADE™

STAFF

Publisher

Lora Lee Gelles 708/873-1921
llgelles@pondtrademag.com

Editor

Jordan Morris
jmorris@pondtrademag.com

Advertising Sales

Lora Lee Gelles 708/873-1921
llgelles@pondtrademag.com

Graphic Design

Gelles Graphics
llgelles@comcast.net

Accounts Receivable

Lois Spano
lspano@pondtrademag.com

Web Editor

Grant Gerke
ggerke@pondtrademag.com

Printer

Sutherland Printing
Montezuma, Iowa

For your
Free Subscription

see our
website www.pondtrademag.com
or call **708/873-1921**

Contact Info

POND Trade Magazine

P.O. Box 2721

Orland Park, IL 60462

708/873-1921 • FAX 760/418-4606

info@pondtrademag.com

www.pondtrademag.com

Publisher's Perspective

Bowled Over!

POND Trade asked Chris Ostrander to write an article about spillways and fountain bowls for this issue. These bowls certainly are a hot ticket right now, and I don't see this trend going away anytime soon.

But what really took me by surprise was how spillways are dotted throughout this issue. Of course, Chris has a stunning gallery of photos and some interesting, detailed information about them in his article. But as the other features and photos started to roll in, we ended up with two other articles that also showcased these bowls. In our Pond Construction feature, which begins on the next page, Bobby Kenyon integrated a massive spillway into his impressive pond display showcase. You'll also find these bowls mentioned in Jaak Harju's article about waterscape designing to the next level on pg. 38. The appeal of spillways truly has a wide reach, not only in terms of visual and auditory aesthetics, but also in regards to simplified installation and maintenance. Take a gander at these three particular features, and you'll see what I mean.

As pond season is now in full swing, this issue is spilling over with a lot of other fascinating content. There's a highly informative piece on pg. 29 about year-round fountain maintenance by Justin Titus, who just so happens to live and work in the "City of Fountains," Kansas City. His tips might make you consider integrating fountain maintenance into your services to provide an extra stream of income for your business. This issue's Language of Koi feature by Levi Crouse delves into the specifics of water purity and pH balance. Turn over to pg. 20 to find a variety of reasons why your water might not be achieving that level of clarity you're looking for. It just might clear up your pond (and your mind). As a garden enthusiast, I also enjoyed Max Phelps' article about pondside trees on pg. 14. Trees can definitely add worlds of color and a little shade and contrast to your aquatic oasis, but you'll want to check out some of Max's very important do's and don'ts before you start planting away.

We hope you are having a terrific pond season thus far. Enjoy designing, building and witnessing the hard-earned fruits of your labor.

Happy PONDering!

Instead of going to school, millions of young children must walk for miles, just to gather water for their families.

Give these children hope!



Visit www.PondsForPeace.org
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IT'S COMING...

The 2017 Water Artisans of the Year contest will be accepting applications in mid-August.

Start making plans to enter your potential winning project!



Weathered limestone water-feature display.



Multiple stacked slate bubbling urns with custom fire-bowl spillway.

| Pond Construction |

Show and Sell

Reveal your repertoire in full-sized pond displays

by Bobby Kenyon,
C.E. Pontz Sons

Being in the business of installing ponds, we've done all types, shapes and sizes over the years. It has been a thriving part of the business for us for a long time. But with more and more landscape contractors installing "ponds," we've got to continue to set ourselves apart from the rest. Thinking outside the box and staying as creative as possible are tasks we embrace on a daily basis.

Designing a pond used to be as simple as spray-painting a layout on the grass and letting the pond crew work their magic. They would build an amazing pond, the homeowner would love it and we'd be on to the next build. With ever-growing competition,

we continue to strive for bigger, brighter and more creative things. Designing and building amazing water features is near the top of that list.

Showcase Flowdown

We've always been known for water features, and that is a big part of our business. But nowadays, every Tom, Dick and Harry are claiming that they install "ponds," and they will do it for cheaper than you will. Unbeknown to the homeowner, these contractors are installing nightmarish water features, most of which will require twice as the much cost as the original price to fix. While in the end this typically provides our company more work in renovating these disasters, they can still cast a shadow over the water garden industry. Those of us in the



This wetland area spills over into weathered limestone waterfalls.

know must hold ourselves responsible to educate homeowners on why shopping around based on price should never be an option. By providing proper education, as well as physically showing the homeowner

tons of features on-site for the public to view. We always request that clients visit us first. Seeing videos or pictures online can help, but nothing compares to physical interaction. This is a great selling tool.

With the ever-growing and expanding market, you have to continue to keep your company ahead of the pack and set it apart from the other guys. One way to do this is with added options to your ponds and water features.

what you can do, this can go a long way.

This is why we like to provide potential customers with the opportunity to come and see what they can have in their own yards — specifically, what we build and how it's constructed. Our Creative Center in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is loaded with

It shows the homeowner that you know how to build amazing water features, and it shows them the different options available. Showing them the quality of your work in person will justify why your price might be higher than the guy with a pickup truck and a shovel. But it doesn't end there.

While there are plenty of hacks in our line of work, there are still numerous quality water feature installers across the country. Being a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor, we enjoy the luxury of their add-on options. While every pond install is one of a kind, there are tons of options to turn something that's already amazing into a masterpiece. Additions like driftwood, fountains, spitters, spillways, fish caves, cored boulders and fire features can really set you apart from the competition.

Our Dazzling Display

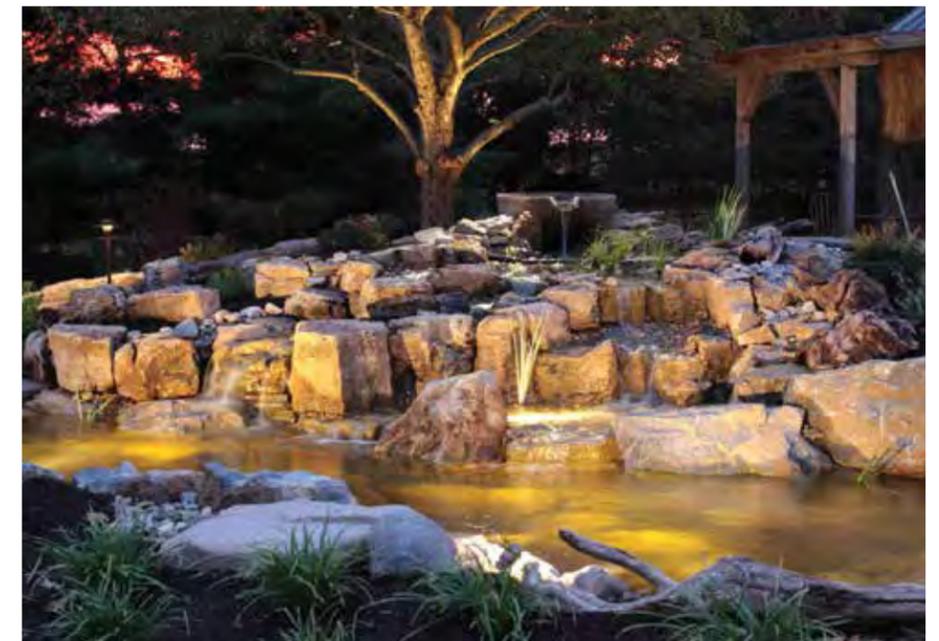
Feast your eyes on one of our masterpieces! This is one of our newest outdoor living displays. While this display incorporates other parts of our business, such as hardscaping, masonry, outdoor audio



This spillway bowl flows into a wetland filter.

and landscape lighting, the water feature is the focus of the display, with many of these features already incorporated. It was constructed during rainy days, slow periods and after-business hours.

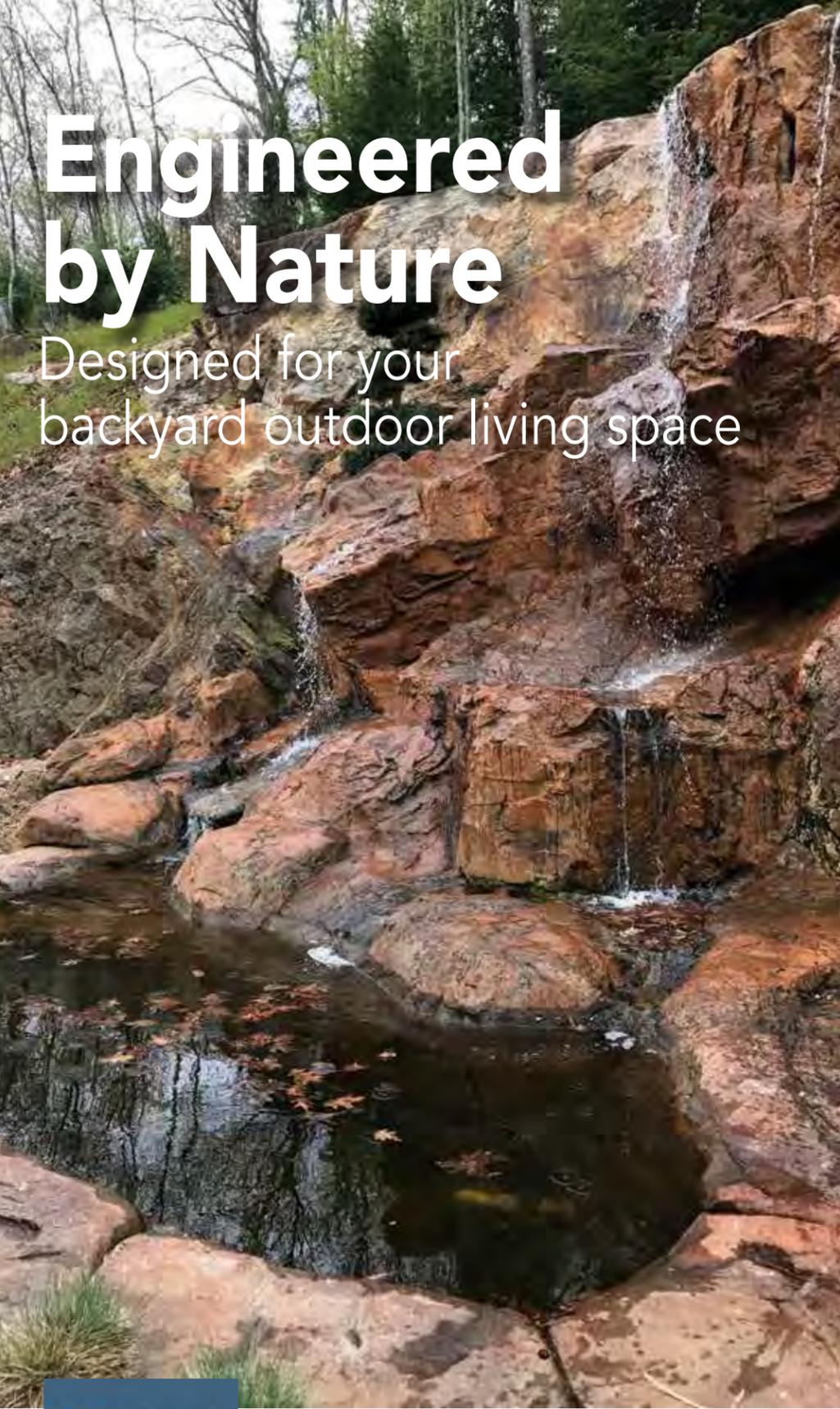
For this build we started out with a large ecosystem pond. The pond is approximately 20 feet long by 15 feet wide. One of the most notable features of the pond is a large limestone boulder drilled to incorporate a fountain-style waterfall. Not only does this boulder look awesome and add tons of aesthetics, but the boulder fountain also helps to circulate what would otherwise be a fairly stagnant area of the pond. A zero-edge spillway was installed, flowing into the basin. The skimmer houses the pumps for the boulder fountain and the small waterfall coming from underneath the log next



Our display feature glows at dusk with underwater LED lighting.

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backyard outdoor living space



An aerial view of the entire display feature in all its glory.

to the boulder.

Weathered limestone boulders were used to construct most of the pond, with a few areas of stacked flagstone included for an added touch. Like in all our water features, we incorporated various logs and driftwood to help naturalize and soften the look of the pond. Never underestimate the added value of a couple of gnarly-looking pieces of driftwood. Not only are they much easier to maneuver, but they also give you that unique look that a boulder sometimes just can't satisfy.

A fish cave was installed to help protect our fish from predators — specifically a local heron that tends to stop by. In most cases, we do a much more elaborate cave. In this case, we used a large piece of irregular flagstone atop the bottom shelf. Typically, these are constructed to completely blend in with the pond, but they can be as simple as a large stone.

The fish will thank you for this. You may not have a heron roaming now, but build a pond, and you soon might.

The final phase of the pond — or beginning phase, depending on how you look at it — flows over a zero-edge spillway into the storage basin. Multiple pumps are housed in the basin for various parts of the water feature; void space was filled with AquaBlox. Atop the basin sit two stacked, slate bubbling urns of various sizes. The larger of the two urns doubles as a fire fountain as well. The third fountain on the basin is a self-contained fire bowl. We customized the bowl to incorporate into the system and added three spillways to it.

From the basin, the water is pumped up through a small bog filter and a spillway-bowl fountain. The spillway pours into the bog filter before entering the falls area. The water then flows down various cascading waterfalls. These

falls were constructed out of a different type of weathered limestone to show the variety of options available.

The pond is also equipped with a copper ionizer and automatic dosing system for ease of maintenance. ☞

About the Author

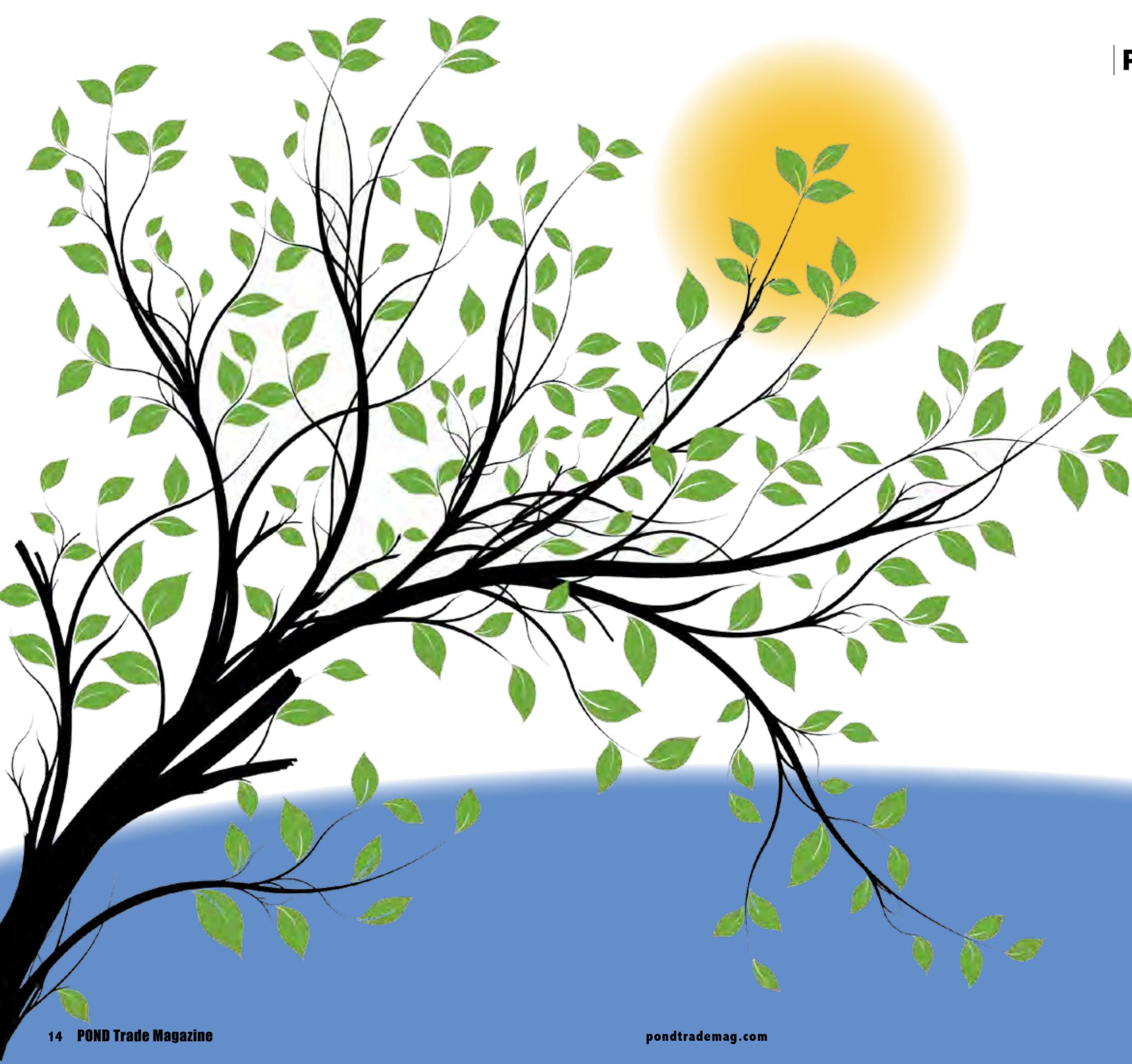
Bobby Kenyon is the creative-solutions guru for C.E. Pontz Sons in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He has over a decade of experience in the landscape and water-garden industries. He enjoys long walks on the beach and grocery shopping, but he has a strong dislike for regular cake and off-brand paper towels.



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TO TREE or NOT to TREE **THAT** is the question

by Max Phelps,
Rock Castles Landscaping

It seems that every nature and landscape photographer seeks out the lake with the reflection of trees or mountains in the water. These are the shots that make for calendar photos that hang on the walls of old-timers like me. Let us consider building our water gardens where they will receive both the shade and the reflecting beauty of a nearby tree. We will explore what works and what may cause a headache.

When a pond builder appraises the location of a new customer who desires a pond or stream with waterfalls, there are quite a few items on my mental checklist.

Where will the homeowners and guests view the new pond or waterfall? How big of a pond is desired? How big is affordable? And, is there any shade? Sure, there are other factors to be considered, but I always look to add a tree to the design if there isn't one nearby the location of the future water garden.

Pros & Cons

On the plus side is shade — it's so much easier to keep fish and wildlife content with the presence of shade, and there is much less aggravation with algae growth. A shallow pond in the South that is situated in the middle of a treeless yard is not a good situation for anyone, including fish and frogs who may have 90-degree water in the afternoons and 60-degree water before sunup. The



full sun and hot water also encourage weeds and algae.

After all, in nature, streams and ponds are almost always lined in some manner with trees, grasses or shrubbery. If the customer wants a natural-looking pond, locating the pond in the middle of a grassy yard or beside a concrete patio only works if you're willing to plant some trees and shrubs to go with it.

The cons? First, of course, is the leaves that will ultimately fall. But I hardly ever see a pond, no matter how far removed from trees it may be, that won't have some leaves in the bottom in the winter or spring. Akin to that is the litter of blossoms, seeds and other messiness that may fall from trees close to a pond or waterfall. Then, finally, there is the worry of tree roots tearing a hole in the liner or disrupting the integrity of the pond.

I have many years of experience, so I've seen most situations. If I know one thing, I know I will pick shade over a few leaves in the skimmer net every single time.

So, why do so many pond "authorities" and books tell new pond owners that they need to stay away from trees and put their ponds out in the open? My guess is that these people don't own a pond and don't really love ponds; they just like the idea of a published book with their name on the cover. After all, it sounds sensible to avoid the trees and problems that might go with them. Or, maybe they see too many ponds built without modern biofalls or skimmers that are always trashy.

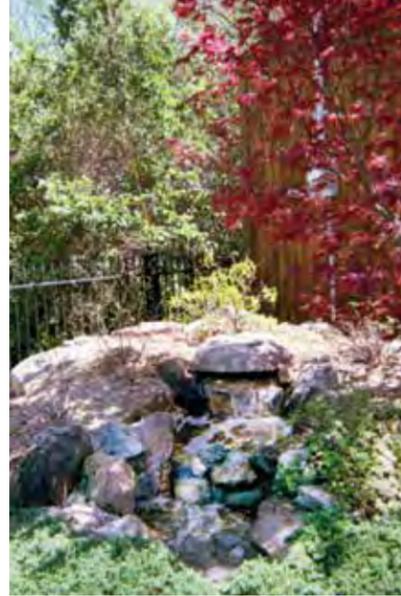
The Pond Shrub Club

Here are some suggested trees that I would use to shade a waterfall or pond. By no means is this a complete list, partly because I live in a temperate Zone 6 — near Appalachia. I use Japanese maples such as Bloodgood or many other clones, with the idea that they should get big enough to provide some shade. I like serviceberries (amelanchier), for shade and for the fruit — the birds and I both love it! I also love yellowwood (*Cladrastus kentuckea*); sometimes I use hemlock, pawpaws, ginkgo, fringe trees, crepe myrtle and junipers to give

The pond shown in the top left photo was constructed in the shadow of a white fringe tree. At bottom, the same feature — 10 years later — is in excellent shade.



This grassy flat lot (top) in 2009 looks the same in 2017. Note the maturity of the trees that were planted. This pond had issues with algae the first couple of years, but not so much after the trees began to provide shade. The photo at left was taken three years after construction, but the plantings were already there. The pond and stream with a bog filter (right) were completed in April 2017. Photos courtesy of Robert Foster and Rebecca Bates.



A Texas pond by Magnolia Ponds is shown at left. Note the woods in background. A Bloodgood Japanese maple (right) that was planted six years ago currently provides shade to a pondless feature owned by Jim and Betty Lucas.

my ponds some shade and some character. Even a scarlet oak or blackgum tree would work.

These trees either have roots that are fine and shallow or taproots that go deep and don't bother the pond. Note that any tree can send roots over a liner's edge and into the water, where it acts like a straw in a soft drink, sucking up pond water and

creating that leak in the springtime you often cannot find. Cherries and willows seem to smell water and climb over obstacles with their roots to get to it.

Avoidable Headaches

Let's begin with any trees that are super messy. This includes river birch,

sycamore and black walnut. The black walnut contains juglone, which is harmful to other plants, and even fish. I would also avoid brittle trees, such as Bradford pears. Redbuds, too, have big, shallow roots, messy seeds and falling blooms.

Pine trees look good near the water, but I find that the needles can clog pads, get past magdrive pump screens, ruin or render inef-

fective backflow valves, be prone to fall in wind or ice storms and have shallow roots that may end up in the pond.

Anecdotally, there can be problems with trees and ponds. But from my nearly 20 years of experience, I've seen no tree, flower, weed or anything else send roots through a pond liner from below if the pond also had a nonwoven, geopad-type underlayment under the rubber. Without such protection, I have seen Russian sage and euonymous roots penetrate a liner that lacks something for padding. I also highly suspect bamboo, thalia and cattails are capable of putting holes in a good-quality liner if care isn't taken from the beginning.

Can large trees be a problem? Perhaps. You don't want to cut roots bigger than an inch or two in diameter in order to dig your pond, because removing large roots could cause nearby trees to die entirely. But, the worst I've had to deal with was a homeowner wanting a pond between

a lovely dogwood and redbud next to her patio. In excavating, I found a major root about 10 inches down at one point. I made a shallow end to the pond and let the water have almost a little stream effect as it headed to the skimmer. Over the years, more than a decade now, the dogwood has died, and the redbud is old and frail, with the root pushing the liner, making the water about 4 inches deep at that point. However, this is the biggest redbud I've ever seen, so it's not likely to grow a lot more. If the redbud should die, this homeowner will have a pond in the sun unless she lets me plant another tree for her.

In summary, I'll take the leaves and trash of a tree or two near my pond in exchange for the shade. The troubles with a hot, sunny pond exceed the messy troubles of a tree in my opinion. The cool shade and more attractive appearance are simply bonuses when landscaping a water feature with some trees. ☞

About the Author

Max Phelps built his first waterfall in 1997. While he has experience farming and beekeeping and ran a tax preparation business for 20-plus years, he has operated Rock Castles Landscaping since 1999. The company designs, builds and specializes in waterfalls and water gardens. Edible landscaping, gardening and farming are part of the culture in rural south-central Kentucky.

Max has been both an Aquascape CAC and a member of the IPPCA. He was also the first-place winner of the "Most Natural-Looking Stream and Waterfalls" at INFOTANZA 2010, and he is the author of the twice-monthly landscape column "Yards to Paradise."

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Koi ponds are a beautiful outdoor feature to enjoy. Keep your fish healthy and enjoy your pond.

Clear Water, Healthy Koi

Optimizing water chemistry and quality

by **Levi Crouse**,
Mt. Parnell Fisheries Inc.

One of the most important yet overlooked aspects to maintaining healthy koi is water quality. Although testing the water may be viewed as too expensive or time-consuming, it is still a necessary task to ensure healthy koi. Could you imagine living in a place where the air you breathe is so contaminated to the point that it makes you sick and decreases your immune response to infection? Or, imagine the oxygen level in the air being decreased to the point that you struggle to breathe. You wouldn't want to live in a place like that, and

neither do your koi. Regular water-quality checks can ensure your koi live a long, healthy life.

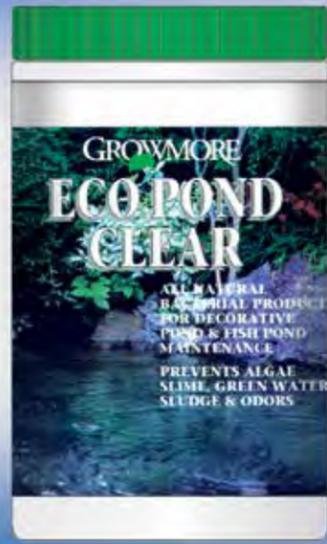
The Water Source

The water source that feeds your pond can have an impact on the overall health of your fish. If your water comes from a well, it is more than likely low in dissolved oxygen. Depending on what area you are in, you could also have supersaturation of other gases such as hydrogen sulfide, which can be detrimental to your fish even at fairly low concentrations. A positive of using well water is that it is usually rather low in suspended solids, keeping your pond clearer and easier to enjoy. If the water source is coming from town or city water, there is probably chlorine or chloramine added to the water in order to reduce bacteria levels. The level of chlorine or chloramine in the water is more than likely beyond the point your fish can handle. Spring-fed ponds are usually very clear and stay cooler through the summer if the temperature rises outside, but the water entering can be low in dissolved oxygen, as it comes from the ground. Colder water tends to hold more oxygen



Aeration is important in any aquatic ecosystem. Appropriate oxygen levels help fish live a long life.

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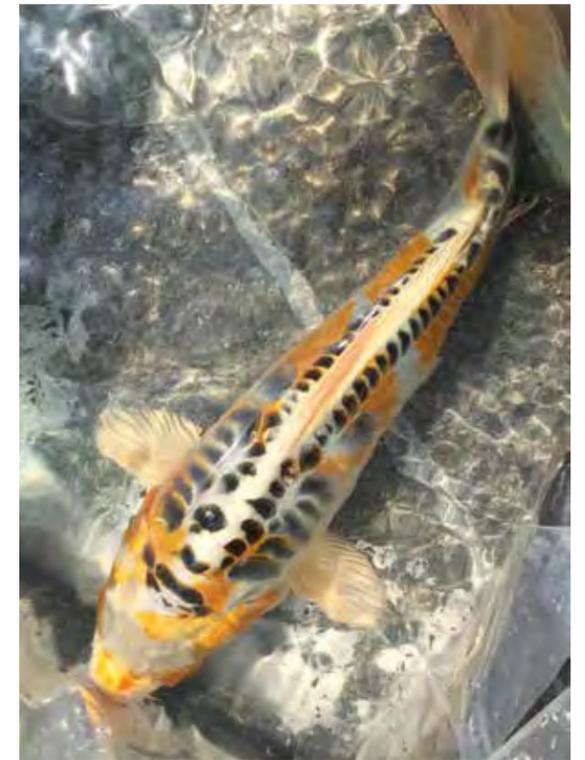
To keep your koi healthy, you should try to keep your pH between 7 and 8. Outside that range, koi will start to stress and therefore will become more susceptible to disease and parasites.

once diffusion has a chance to occur. However, more than likely, your pond has some type of filter system for clarity and oxygen. A filter can remove toxic, nitrogen-containing compounds such as ammonia, nitrite and nitrate, while some form of aeration can force out supersaturation of unwanted gases and increase dissolved oxygen levels.

What is your Dissolved Oxygen?

Dissolved oxygen will vary throughout the day and night. Early-morning hours are a great

time to check your pond's dissolved oxygen, because this allows you to see your lowest point throughout the cycle of the day. At this time, the dissolved oxygen should be no lower than 3 or 4 parts per million (ppm). While koi will survive at much lower levels of dissolved oxygen for shorter periods of time, it is not healthy for the fish. Low oxygen can contribute to other problems; when fish are stressed in any way, they tend to become more susceptible to parasites and disease. The saturation point for dissolved oxygen can vary slightly depending on the altitude and temperature.



When koi are added to a pond, the water temperature and osmotic conditions should be as close as possible to avoid stress.

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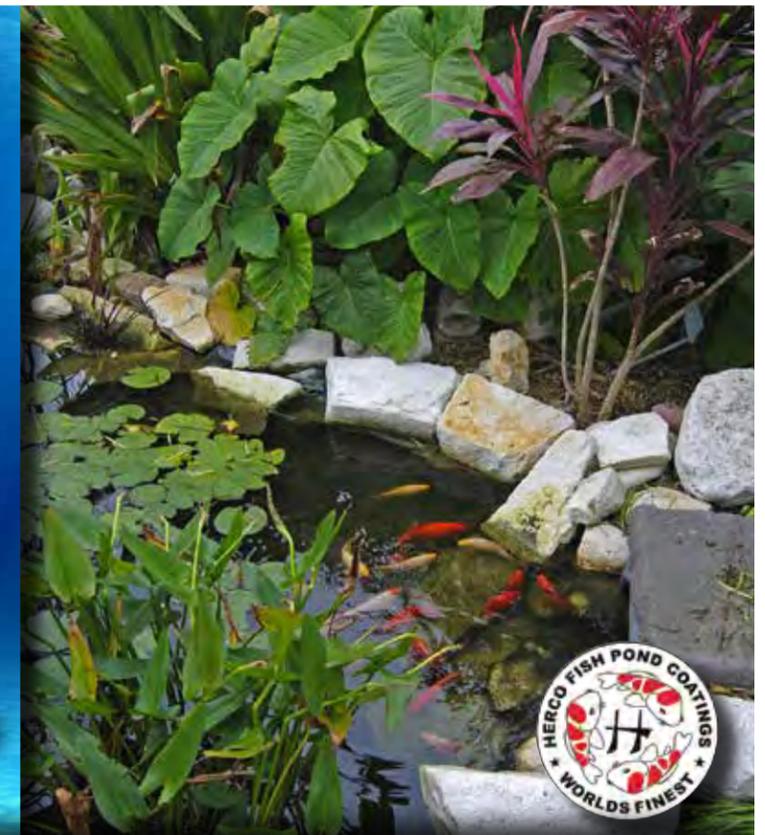
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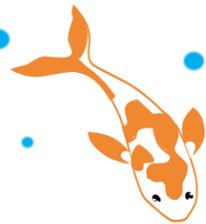
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by Matt Larose

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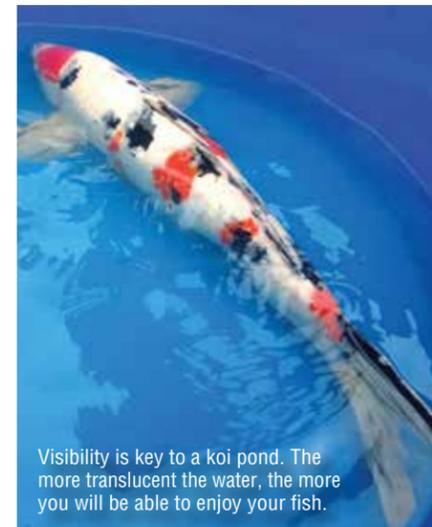
For more information, contact Matt Larose at mlarose@biosafesystems.com or call 1.888.273.3088 x 204.

A good rule is to not allow the dissolved oxygen to drop below half the saturation point for a given area.

There are many ways to increase oxygen levels in a pond, but some of the cheaper remedies are pretty simple. Agitation of the water to increase surface area, and thus the diffusion rate, is the most basic and widely used method to increase oxygen levels throughout the night. Be careful of doing this during the day if there are phytoplankton and plants present in the water. Agitation may drive oxygen out if the water becomes super-saturated from photosynthesis. It is always a good idea to keep track of your dissolved oxygen levels if you think you might be having problems.

What is your pH?

The pH will vary slightly throughout the day. To keep your koi healthy, you should try to keep your pH between 7 and 8. Outside that range, koi will start



Visibility is key to a koi pond. The more translucent the water, the more you will be able to enjoy your fish.

is low. Alkalinity is consumed during the nitrogen cycle when toxic forms of nitrogen are converted to less toxic forms that plants can uptake. The alkalinity of a pond should not get below 40 ppm under any circumstance, or the pH will swing, and the koi may become stressed. It is not uncommon to see koi do just fine in water where the alkalinity is as high as 200 ppm, but it shouldn't be much higher than that. In a larger pond, alkalinity can be increased fairly easily with any form of lime. In a smaller pond, alkalinity is increased very efficiently with sodium bicarbonate.

The Nitrogen Cycle

Unlike mammals who excrete urea, fish excrete ammonia due to the abundance of water around to dilute this highly toxic compound. The problem comes when the level of ammonia rises before it is able to be converted. The total ammonia nitrogen can be obtained with a test kit. This is a measure of all

to stress and therefore will become more susceptible to disease and parasites. Large pH swings can indicate that the alkalinity is not where it needs to be.

Alkalinity

The pH will swing much more throughout the day if your alkalinity

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the nitrogen that is present in the ammonia. To find the level of toxic ammonia, the pH and temperature of the water is needed. If you have a test kit, it should explain how to calculate this value. Toxic ammonia can be harmful for your koi at very low levels — much less than 1 ppm. Nitrogen-fixing plants or filters are a good strategy to cope with this stressor. If an immediate solution is necessary, such as in the case of very stressed and sick fish, temperature manipulation and water exchanges can be used.

Is Your Water Clear?

Along with not allowing you to see your beautiful koi in your pond as well as you wish you could, turbidity can cause some other unseen problems. The suspended solids in the water can cause oxygen to not dissolve as readily as it would in water that has less turbidity. A good filter system will often take care of any issue you would have with turbidity. Some aquatic plants are effective at removing turbidity in water as well. Overfeeding can cause some turbidity issues if the organic matter from

About the Author



Levi Crouse has a bachelor's degree in biology from Shippensburg University in south-central Pennsylvania. He is originally from Big Cove Tannery, Pennsylvania. He works at Mt. Parnell Fisheries in Mercersburg and

enjoys his job raising and spawning different types of goldfish, koi and rosy-red minnows. He has attended various water quality workshops and has learned a wealth of information through his experiences at an aquaculture facility.

the feed is able to dissolve into the water.

I recommend trying to test your water on some kind of a schedule and keep records of your results. Testing in the morning and in the evening will give you the best viewpoints. Keeping records will allow you to see the changes in your pond over time. Some changes may be seasonal, but if your fish begin to look sick, you can go back and view the

changes. Once the problem is identified, it can be fixed much more swiftly and cost-effectively than the trial-and-error method. If you do see a change that concerns you, call someone with experience in water gardens or ponds to help interpret your results. Testing your water once a month is better than not testing it at all. Your koi will love you for their improved health. ☘

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This fountain is open and ready for the season.

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The Geyser Adviser

Maintenance tools
and techniques from the
City of Fountains

by **Justin Titus,**
Monet Aquatics

Kansas City is known as the City of Fountains. With 200 registered city fountains and many more residential and commercial features in a centralized location, our customers' expectations are elevated. The techniques, tools and tricks used here in Kansas City can be adapted to most regions and can provide a steady stream of income for the water-feature professional.

Open for Business

Opening fountains usually starts between mid-April and early May and is largely predicated by the amount of debris from flowering trees and migrating birds. If features are opened too early, motors get clogged with birch and oak catkins as well as lots of waste from birds moving through or back into the area. It has also proven very important to open fountains before Mother's Day to keep customers happy.

In many ways, opening time is very gratifying, but it can also be very frustrating. To see clear water spraying about is a beautiful sight and a reminder of how special this job can be. On the



Clockwise from left: A cover sheds water in the winter. Once the cover comes off, you can see that a tomato cage was used as the interior support for the fountain cover. An above-ground pump pit (top and above) is shown closed and open. An empty reservoir and slotted covers (bottom left) are installed, all ready for winter.



other hand, regardless of whether a fountain worked like a dream when it was shut down the previous three months, when it is turned on again and a motor is burned out or plumbing is cracked and the auto-fill is not working, it can be very time-consuming when time is in short supply. Opening is basically a reversal of the closing process: putting plumbing back together, lubricating O-rings, replacing light bulbs, pressurizing the system and checking for leaks. This should all be done in a systematic, focused manner to avoid missing any details. With some of the more advanced systems, the smallest

component out of place can cause lots of damage.

Submersible vs. External

For the purposes of this article, fountains can be classified in two ways: submersible and external pump-driven. There are different considerations and techniques required for each, although weekly maintenance for either is ideal to keep them in the best aesthetic condition. Typically, smaller fountains like those found in the yards of residential customers are submersible pump-driven and hold less water volume. The pumps are located in a compartment

within the lowest bowl, hidden from view by a removable door. The challenge is how quickly the small volume of water can build up nutrients that feed vigorous algae and bacterial growth. A full flush and scrub-down of the system may be required several times a season.

Larger-volume fountains with more automation rarely need the same complete clean-out. More sophisticated fountains come with many options for display and maintenance, and many are driven by external motors plumbed with various filters and valves. Housing this equipment out of sight in an underground pump

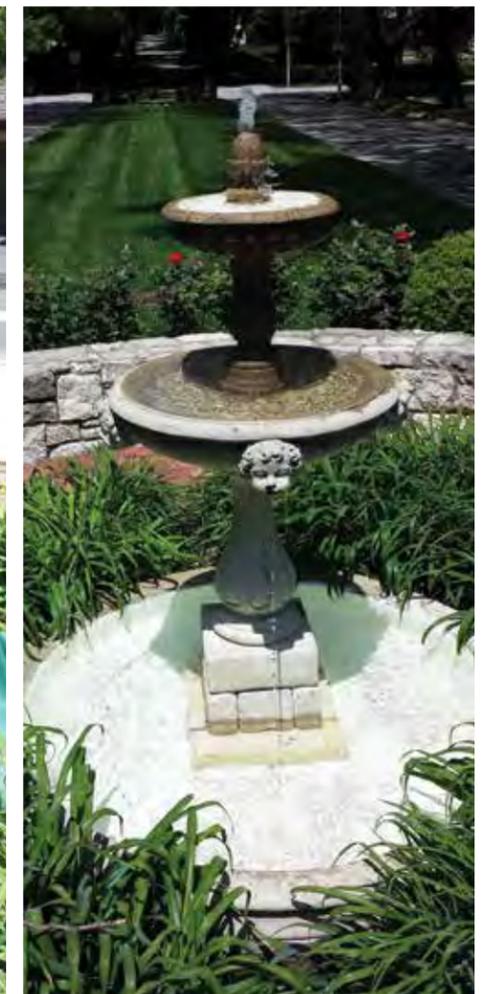


This fountain was dyed pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

chamber is a popular option, allowing flooded suction for an external pump and space for supplementary systems. The biggest concern for this setup is flooding. A flood in the pump chamber can lead to a total loss of vital components. Having a sump pump in the lowest part of the pump chamber is a must for these systems. An above-grade system alleviates the dangers of flooding but can be an eyesore and subject to vandalism.

Better Living Through Chemistry

Maintenance requirements vary by the type of feature, yet all have the same goal of clear water flowing properly. Knowing the water chemistry and how to adjust it is very helpful in achieving this goal. Of primary concern are pH, carbonate hardness, phosphate and chlorine levels. The pH is a determining factor on how treatments will react within the system. A range of 7.8 to 8 pH is a worthy goal — slightly higher than most swimming pools, but still wildlife-friendly. The water will vary wildly from that range if not buff-



A cover (left) encapsulates the fountain piece and reservoir. The fountain (right) is ready for the season!

ered. Buffering the water to a target of 125 parts per million (ppm) carbonate hardness (KH) can be attained easily by using the proper amount of baking soda. Phosphates can lead to algae blooms, so knowing the levels and reducing them is wise.

There are many products on the market to sequester phosphate in fountains, and all seem to do a fine job. Chlorine is one of those necessary evils when it comes to fountains. Chlorine can be very hard on the components of the fountain, so using just enough to keep things looking nice is a balancing act. That act is helped by using an algacide. A very effective product is one that contains no metal, is non-foaming, and is 60-percent Poly [oxyethylene (dimethylimino) ethylene-(dimethylimino) ethylene dichloride]. This can be found at most swimming pool supply stores and is usually referred to simply as "60 percent." Getting the product in contact with the offending algae or bacteria is



A fully concealable, underground pump chamber and control panel.

where the man-power comes in. Using soft, plastic bristled brushes of varying sizes, from toothbrush to push-broom size, one should dislodge as much sessile unwanted material and get it into suspension. Some detritus will be immediately

taken out by the filters, and ideally the rest will be neutralized by the correct balance of chemistry and product. All these levels of water chemistry work together, along with some elbow grease from the service technician, to achieve a great-looking fountain.

During the season, there are different holidays when clients may want to change the color of the water as part of the celebration. Here in Kansas City, the most popular colors are blue for the local baseball team, the Royals, and pink in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Be sure to use dyes that are highly reactive to chlorine so you don't permanently dye the fountain!

Toolbox Must-Haves & Winterization

Service technicians will need basic tools on-hand like screwdrivers, channel locks and a garden hose for filling. A net is helpful for removing floating leaves

and bugs, but a net with a flattened or straight front edge is handy to scoop larger items like coins and rocks out of the reservoir. Debris like sand that is too heavy to get sucked into the filter, too fine to be scooped out and doesn't react to the treatments, can be vacuumed using a 1-inch inside-diameter hose. It is beneficial to keep a measuring cup and conversion chart on-hand for exact dosing. One common mistake in converting is to assume 1 ounce of volume is the same as 1 ounce of weight. That conversion depends on the product being used, and sometimes weighing it yourself is the only way to get it right.

In a climate with freezing winter temperatures, it is necessary to shut down and winterize fountains annually. Based on customer requests, most fountains are kept running until after Halloween. The first couple of weeks in November are filled with draining reservoirs, blowing water out of plumbing lines and covering statuary fountain pieces. In situations with submersible pumps, the pump will need to be pulled, if possible, and stored in a tub of water where it won't freeze. If pulling the submersible pump is not an option — if, for example, it is hard-wired into a junction box — the next-best option is to find a watertight container with a lid. Store the pump in the container and fill it with organic RV and marine antifreeze. The lid may need to be notched just enough to allow the cord to exit, but not enough to let precipitation into the container.

External pump fountains should have all power turned off except for the dedicated line to the sump pump in order to protect against flooding through the winter and early spring. The main reservoir of the fountain should be kept dry. Sometimes a fountain cover will encapsulate the entire structure, but in cases where the reservoir is open to collect water through the winter, drain plugs should be left open. Depending on the size of the drain, it is a good idea to replace the plug with a slotted drain cover, which will let water drain while still preventing the drain line from becoming clogged with large leaves and stones. Water in the



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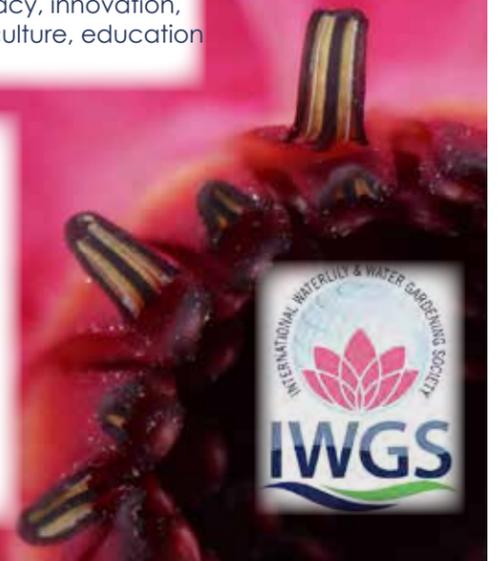
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This dirty fountain was opened too early and got clogged with debris, which can be avoided.

winter is a concern for decorative fountain pieces as well. A vinyl cover works well for protecting fountain pieces from degradation. Sometimes it is necessary to have a custom cover fabricated, but in most cases, an off-the-shelf model will do just fine. Supporting the cover from the inside eliminates water collection, which can lead to damage from expanding ice. The support separates the decorative fountain piece from getting damaged by the cover moving with the wind. This protection can be as simple as a tomato cage turned upside down with a tennis ball stuck on the end to cover the sharp parts. Be sure to strap down the inside support and the cover independently of each other. Using a good-quality waxed twine will make this job much easier and will last though the dormant months.

Regular fountain maintenance can fit nicely into almost any contractor's schedule. One day a week dedicated to water tests and treatments can add steady cash flow for any business, and all it takes is a

bit of education and planning. Fountains are being built and installed all the time, and the owners need someone to take care of them. There is no reason that person can't be you! ☺

About the Author

Justin Titus owns Monet

Aquatics, a water garden design-and-service business operating in the greater Kansas City metro area. He is the vice president of the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society (IWGS), where like-minded folks are dedicated to the furtherance of all aspects of water gardens. Justin has an education in horticulture and more than 17 years of professional experience in the water-gardening field.



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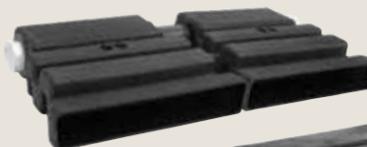
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LEVEL UP

Creative designing to the next degree

by Jaak Harju,
Atlantis Water Gardens

I love small water features! The simplicity of a patio pond or disappearing waterfall makes it easy for a crew to replicate a systematic process day after day, keeping your operation profitable while still delivering a custom product to your happy customer. Managing your all-important profit margin with a small water feature installation is a breeze when you are not affected too much by weather, site conditions, material staging and multiple pieces of heavy equipment.

That being said, there is something very satisfying about pushing your creative talents with a challenging, customized water feature. Incorporating large boulders, fountainscape pieces, cantilevered structures or hardscape elements can be an exciting prospect that emboldens your inner designer to stretch boundaries and fulfill your artistic dreams.

More often than not, we as designers find ourselves faced with having to balance feeding our creative desires with actually making money (after all, this is our livelihood — not a hobby), so it is important to temper your design direction so that it falls in line with your client's budget and provides a healthy profit margin for your company.

It's not always easy to take on an interesting, one-off project without the risk of sacrificing your financial well-being. So, how do we provide that "next level" of creative design while insuring that we meet the profitability requirements of our business plan?

Feeding creative needs and healthy profits should go hand-in-hand when building custom disappearing waterfalls.



Define the Vision

Imagine standing in a suburban backyard, at the entrance to a large subdivision or in a courtyard for an assisted living facility. Each of these venues would require a distinctive design perspective to achieve the desired experience for that particular space.

Perhaps in the case of the assisted living facility, the client would like to create a tranquil, holistic courtyard where the residents can spend time with loved ones, with a garden that provides the perfect ambience for a quiet conversation. Designing a large, cascading waterfall might not be the

best choice for this scenario. Maybe a few, well-placed fountainscapes with hardscape surrounds and underwater lighting would be a better fit, so the sound of the water wouldn't overpower a conversation or relaxing moment.

The suburban backyard, as another example, is where the majority of water feature installers cut their teeth. So, when it comes to designing a custom water feature for someone's home, it is important to first find out how the client's vision fits with your own. Trying to force your amazing vision on a potential client is a great way to scare them off. So, perhaps spend some

time getting to know how they plan to use the space or what their likes and dislikes are.

Ask Creative Questions

For me, this always starts with lots of creative questions. These types of questions will help your client envision the space they will be living in every day, in turn giving you the right direction take your design. Instead of asking the basic questions (e.g., "How large of a feature do you need?" or "How big is your budget?"), try taking it to the next level.

A tranquil pond (left) and patio bowls (right) provide the perfect backdrop for a quiet conversation.

Some key, outside-the-box questions include:

"Could you paint me a picture of what you'd like to see when you look out the kitchen window?"

"Imagine sitting in a chair on your patio. What does your new water feature sound like?"

"When you come home from work at night, what would you want to see when you walk into the backyard?"

At this point, make a mental note of those features the customer desires that are beyond the standard feature. These items will then have to be priced accordingly in order to maintain your profit margin.

Show, Don't Tell

If a large pond is on their wish list, perhaps you could ask for more specifics or show examples, such as:

Personalize the questions. Ask a family, "Is there a deck hanging over one edge of the pond where your kids could put their hands in the water and feed the fish?"

Provide a photo album of any special features you have already priced



Above: Asking the right questions helps the customer visualize their dream. Integrate a living space into the water-feature design with a patio or a well-placed set of natural stepping stones.

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Over-the-top fountainscapes can be a fantastic curb-appeal element.

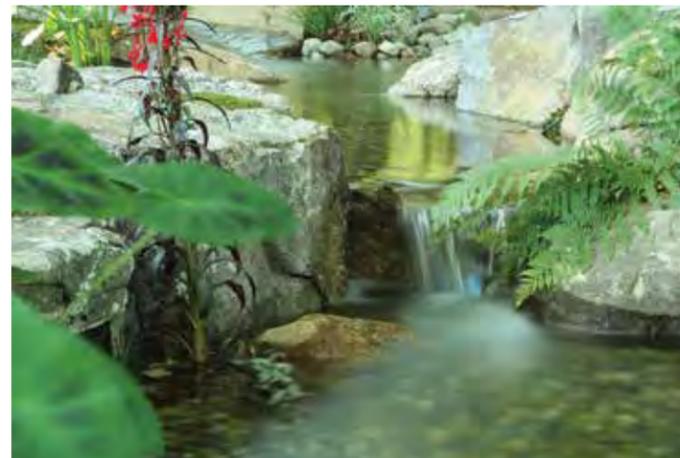
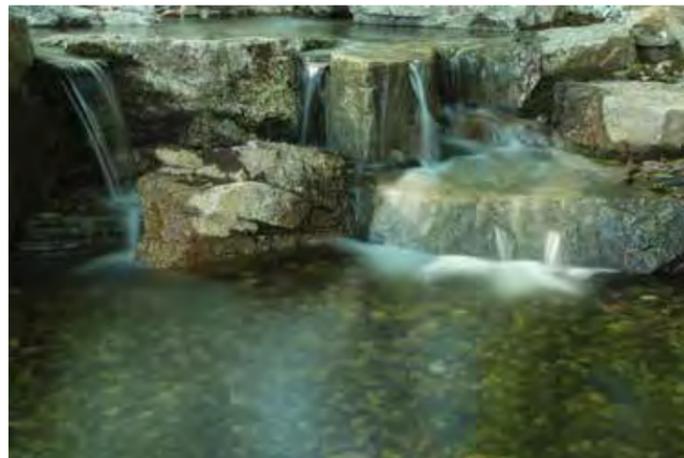
out as options, but with additional cost. Examples include multiple waterfalls, larger boulders, fountainscape pieces and cantilevered structures.

Make a note of their current landscaping design, because it can be an indicator of their taste in style. The water feature should complement or add to the current look and feel. Examples include a natural look versus a symmetrical look, and lots of textures and

color versus a consistent, streamlined design.

Or, is your client looking for lots of cascading water? A subdivision entrance would be the perfect place to recreate the big boulder waterfall from your favorite hiking spot or an over-the-top, custom fountainscape. The decision-makers for these projects will usually be looking to make a substantial impact, so having pictures of different water features will be

important to make an impression. There are usually multiple people to convey your design ideas to — possibly even landscape architects or other designers — so starting off with a good presentation of pictures will be important. Helping these people understand the value of a custom water feature in creating a lasting impression for their location will be key in capturing the imagination of your audience.



Showing potential customers examples of your craft is a great way to help them envision the possibilities. A waterfall featuring multiple cascades (left) or a flowing stream with a single drop into a pooling area (right) are excellent examples of this strategy.



Ship Ahoy! Adding garden accents to a water feature is a great way to personalize a customer's space.

Helping your client paint a mental picture will take a lot of ambiguity out of your design process if you truly listen to what they are saying. If you are asking the right questions like those mentioned previously, they will sell themselves on their particular vision of an aquatic paradise.

Know Your Numbers, Live the Dream

Regardless of how far outside the box you want to go to create a customized feature for a creative client, it's extremely important that you first know how your business operates. Profit margins vary from business to business, and only you know your exact expenses and daily costs based on the size of your company. What are your financial goals for the season? If you can do three small, standard jobs and make more money than one custom job in the same amount of time, you need to

revisit your business plan. We at Atlantis Water Gardens don't believe in sacrificing profit margins for the sake of a single job. There is a creative fine line we all have to walk. In every job, little or small, if you define what the customer wants, ask the right questions and show the client what is possible, a little creativity can go a long way in increasing your sales without having to gamble on the profitability of a single creative experiment.

Personally, designing and installing water features has been like a dream for me, and I'm sure you may feel the same way. The possibilities are dizzying at times, and I'm continually impressed by the different ideas and configurations that come out of the many talented people in our industry. No matter your choice of equipment, methodology or skill level, as long as you get up each day and love what you are doing, you are truly living your dream! 



About the Author

Jaak Harju and his wife JoAnn are Master Certified Aquascape Contractors and own Atlantis Water Gardens in Denville, New Jersey. They have been building water features since 1998 and were named the No. 1 Aquascape Retailer/Contractor in 2016. After starting as a union heavy equipment operator in 1993, Jaak found a passion for water features as a hobby and eventually started Atlantis Water Gardens in 2000. Spending time with his wife and two teenage sons is his first love, but riding and racing enduro motorcycles is a close second.

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View of the north-end beach entry. Note how the ladder shows the depth of this pond.

Mile-High Desert Digs

Supervising a do-it-yourself build for a trout pond

by **Kent Wallace**,
Living Water Solutions

Two years ago, I was contacted by a retired couple about helping them design a pond at their home. Having never built a pond before, Bruce wanted to build it himself. He had grand ideas but said he needed advice, equipment and a lot of guidance. The home was in Mountain Springs, a summit area on Highway 160 south of Las Vegas, linking it to Pahrump, Nevada. The altitude there is 5,490 feet and, unlike Las Vegas, it freezes heavily in the wintertime. Bruce didn't necessarily want koi — but trout. His goal was to bring in local trout and create a habitat.

Not Your Typical Desert

The property was beautiful with lots of high-desert trees, including pines and an orchard. A 9-foot drop behind the home toward the rest of his property was

where he wanted the waterfall to go. He wanted two ponds, with the upper pond on the same level as the back of the house and a waterfall dropping to the larger pond below. I calculated somewhere around 8,000 gallons as a general design capacity to shoot for. With the temperatures at the summit relatively cooler than those in Vegas, and having the large waterfall, we could keep it close to a one-time-per-hour turnover rate.

One of the problems we addressed was the winter freeze. The waterfall would freeze, so he wanted to be able to bypass most of the water in the wintertime. We also agreed that the lower pond should be at least 4 to 5 feet deep. The lower pond would be an oval with a beach area on the north end, so we put the settlement tank, prefilter, skimmer and pump vault on the south end to the right as you face the waterfall. A staircase pathway to the right

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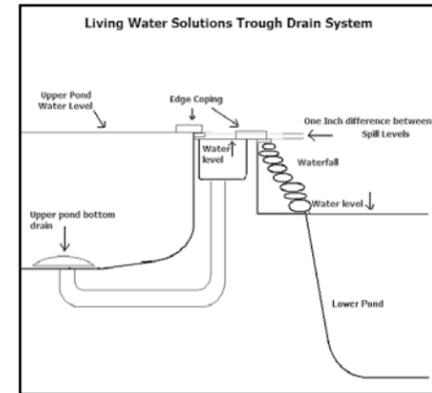
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would parallel the waterfall, with all the plumbing from the pump going underneath the path to the top.

Design Goals

With a basic layout established, it was time to design the system. Water from the pond bottom would flow through two 4-inch, non-aerated bottom drains to a



Wave 36 220-gallon settlement tank with a 24-inch static prefilter. I chose non-aerated bottom drains because I didn't want to pull the warmer water off the bottom and blast it to the top when the air came on in the winter. The in-pond aeration is done with two aeration sticks on each side of the pond between the waterfall and the beach entry. The air sticks, which are made with aeration tubing, are located on the plant shelves just below the surface. This position keeps the aerated water from disturbing the surface flow in front of the skimmer on the other end and will keep the surface from freezing solid in the winter. For the skimmer, I recommended a Helix with the fish-safe circular weir.

The pump vault is dug into the ground a couple of feet deep to protect it from the cold. The pump vault has an insulated lid. The settlement tank, pre-filter and skimmer are joined at the front of the pump intake with isolation valves. A 3-inch line from the prefilter and a 2-inch line from the skimmer connect to a Wave II 1/2-hp pump. This pump flows at just under 8,000 gph at 10.39 feet of head using 5.87 amps. One 3-inch line runs from the pump to the top, where the biofilters are located. A 3-by-2-inch tee is located just off the pump inside the vault to divert water directly back into the pond



The south end of the pond (left) houses the mechanical part of the pond. The upper pool (right) has the 55-gallon-drum sand and gravel filters.

through a pair of tangential pond returns. These can be adjusted for light circulation in the summer and for heavier bypass flow during the colder months. A Medo 80-lpm air pump is located inside the pump vault with a timer for the aeration sticks.

"Trough-Drain" System

Upper ponds are always an issue when it comes to proper circulation and drainage. Typically, without an active bottom drain, an upper pond becomes a giant settlement tank. Aeration can be used to move solids over the spill, but I like to use my "trough-drain" system. This is a way to create an active bottom drain in an

upper pond with no moving parts. When a dual-pond system shuts down, water in the upper pond will lower to the height of the spill and stop. This is usually about a half inch, depending on how well the spill stones are sealed. In a trough-drain system, the upper pond bottom drain line comes up just on the outside of the spill into a trough that is constructed with a secondary spill located 1 inch below the first spill. This trough creates a gravity-flow split between water levels of 1 inch. A 3-inch line will flow approximately 1,800 gph at a 1-inch difference, and a 4-inch line will flow approximately 3,600 gph.

We used a 3-inch bottom drain on the upper pond, which means that with

a flow of about 8,000 gph, 1,800 gph will flow from the bottom drain, with the rest flowing over the upper spill and creating the waterfall. When the water is shut down for any reason, the upper pond lowers 1 inch and stops. When running, the trough-drain system creates an active-bottom drain flow hidden within the total waterfall flow. I've used this system many times in the past, but Bruce decided not to build the trough. He simply let the water exit 1 inch below the spill on the waterfall face, and it worked beautifully.

Filtration Success

For biofiltration, we used four upflow sand and gravel filters built with my kits.



The staircase and the pond (left) are parallel to each other and match aesthetically. Carl (right) is inspecting the waterfall.

I like these because they're very versatile. The 3-inch line comes up from the pump and splits with valves to each biofilter. Each

biofilters have my 57-watt, downflow UV lights installed in the downflow pipe inside the filters. Placing the UV lights inside the filters helps hide them in a system where there is little space to hide anything and keeps the electrical system located high on the hill near the house.

Bruce wasn't sure his upper drain was working, so we took a brush, stirred up some debris around the drain dome and watched it flow through the outlet at the top of the falls. It took Bruce two years and a lot of work, but he got it running just in time for his daughter's wedding at his home.

I've helped many DIY-ers in the past, but because of his attention to detail, I think this is one of the best. ✂



55-gallon-drum sand and gravel filter can flow a maximum of 2,000 gph, which made for a perfect fit in this system. Two of the

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 racecar 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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Spill It!

Make a splash with spillways and patio ponds

by Chris Ostrander,
Living Water Landscape Service

In 1997, I talked my mom into letting me build a pond for her. I didn't know anything about what I was doing at the time. We bought a pre-formed plastic tub, pumps and even a plastic waterfall and integrated them all into my first "pond." It was a fun experience, but needless to say, that particular pond was always trouble. More than anything, it was difficult to maintain. No matter what I did, I could never get the water to clear up.

I never really liked the look of that thing, anyway. I am thankful for that pond, though, because it introduced me to this great industry. Ever since building my mom's pond, I have been trying to make my ponds, streams and waterfalls look more and more natural as time moves on.

Lately, though, something a little more exciting, though a little less natural, has been creeping into my designs for clients' yards and gardens.

Bowl-ing Green

Spillways, patio ponds and other fountain-scape-type features are becoming more and more popular these days. Formal stone and concrete fountains have been a staple of water-scapes for centuries, but more recent advances in materials engineering have drastically reduced the weight and cost of these features, and thus have enabled them to become more versatile and mainstream.

After all, you've certainly seen these round shapes in landscapes for decades — like gazing balls and birdbaths, for example. Concrete patios with curves seem softer and more inviting. Circles, spheres and curves just look natural in landscapes, and adding a little splash of water to those circles can create a gorgeous focal point in a garden.

One of the more popular examples of



These hanging bowls create a mesmerizing visual effect. (Genoscapes, Joey Genovese)

fountain bowls is Aquascape's Spillway Bowl, Basin and Stand, which the company debuted in 2015. Though they might look like heavy, formal stone fountains, they are actually hand-casted in glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC), drastically reducing the weight and cost of these features — not to mention making them much easier to install and maintain.

Standalone or Accessory

If you've seen these features in a backyard or commercial fountain setting, you know what a stunning impact they can immediately have. The visual and auditory enhancement of running water coupled with the elegant, smooth features of these spillways can carry a landscape or waterscape as a standalone fountain.

Existing water gardens can benefit from the look of an integrated spillway, too. Or, you can combine a series of these features to craft a creative, one-of-a-kind configuration. A series of bowls of water spilling into a stream or pond not only provides added sound and visual interest, but it also can help aerate and, in some cases, filter the water.

These features can also carefully control water flow. As with any water feature, making the water go where you want it to go at an ideal rate of flow is very important. The inclusion of spillways allows the water to exit the bowl, making installation that much easier. They also help control and minimize splashing, allowing you and your customer more time for dressing up the new water feature rather than coping with technical

issues and malfunctions.

Easy Installation

Due to the surprisingly lightweight nature of these features, you don't have to worry about transporting and setting up heavy machinery to assist in the installation. Thus, the integration possibilities are practically endless, allowing you to place these in a wide variety of locations.

The gentle shape of these bowls make them fit just about anywhere. They come in so many different sizes, which allows them to be squeezed into some pretty tight spaces. Patio ponds are bowl-shaped water features that can even sustain fish and plants on an apartment or condominium patio or balcony. This versatility allows you to add bubbly water to even the most unlikely of places.

These features have built-in reservoirs that also house pumps and plumbing. Water is pumped up through the spillway and is

then recirculated in some manner, depending on your configuration. The obvious key here is to ensure that the bowls are well secured and perfectly level from side-to-side and front-to-back. After the foundation is set, just install the plumbing and add the water, and you're good to go.

Endless Possibilities

Because of their versatility and fairly easy installation, bowls can be used in some interesting applications. We once had a client who wanted a wall behind their outdoor kitchen. They didn't just want a block wall — they also wanted to incorporate water. The result was a pretty amazing backsplash that harvested rainwater to sustain the system. Our clients got the privacy they were looking for without having to stare at a concrete wall!

The simple installation and minimal maintenance make spillways a great tool for a new water gardener



These bowls (above) placed next to a patio add visual interest and soothing sounds.



Moss added to the spillway bowl (right) gives it a furry new look. (www.WaterFeaturesByGerard.com) Water marginal plants, stumps (below left) and LED lighting (below right) can give each spillway its own identity, thus broadening the design and construction possibilities.

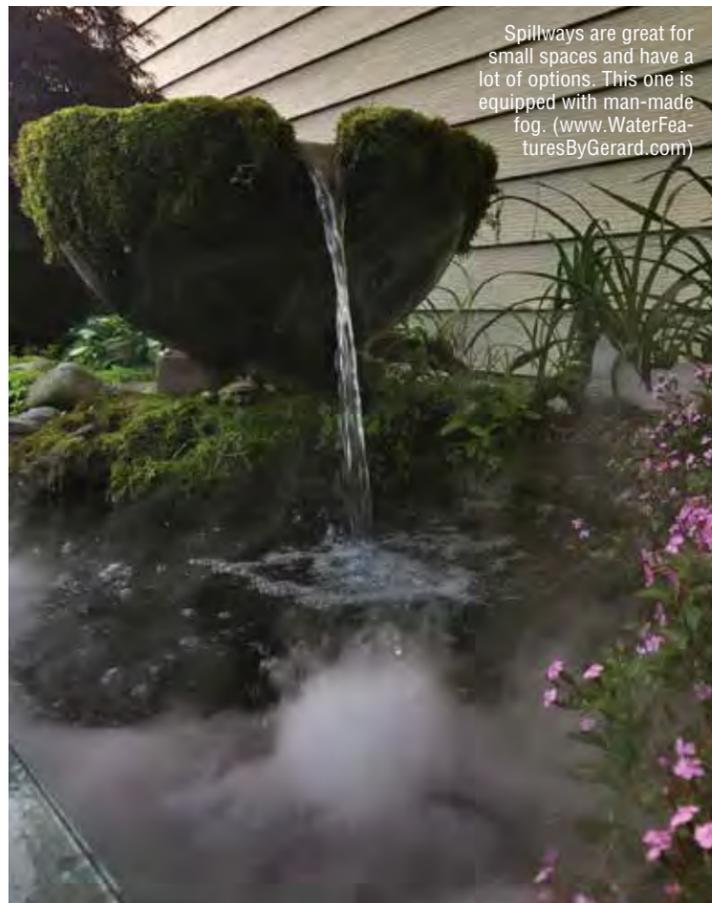


These bowls were created with privacy in mind and carry with them an array of relaxing sounds. (Living Water Landscape Service, Chris Ostrander)





The potential configurations of bowls are endless. These three bowls along with the natural stone add interest to this outdoor space.



Spillways are great for small spaces and have a lot of options. This one is equipped with man-made fog. (www.WaterFeaturesByGerard.com)

to make a big splash in their landscapes, too. A two-person team can complete most spillway projects in one day — with minimal swearing! A simple bowl spilling a little bit of water can have a huge impact in any garden. It's well worth the digging, leveling and dressing-up that it takes to install them.

If you're an advanced water-feature artist, let

your creativity take hold. Fountain bowls can create unique features and even some indoor waterworks! They can be tilted, stacked, hung and tipped to fit almost any style or design.

So, if you are looking for something to add to your garden, water garden or maybe even the entrance to your office, consider the subtle pizzazz of a spillway and some flowing water. ☺

About the Author

Chris Ostrander has been in the landscaping business for more than 20 years. In 2007, he decided to open his own company, Living Water Landscape Service. After a few years of running a full-service landscape company, he decided he wanted to specialize in one area — water features. Today, most of his work revolves around water features. He is a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor and was named the 2015 CAC of the Year.



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Go Sell it on the Mountain

Mountain Top Marketing Mastermind Seminar

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

POND Trade was invited to the Mountain Top Marketing Mastermind seminar, and I took them up on it. After all, a trip to Colorado in April? Sure, I can do that.

The seminar was run by the nice folks at the Contractor's Sales Academy (CSA). The day was loaded with useful information about how to market your company in various creative ways.

Not Your Average Seminar

One of the first things I noticed when I arrived in Manitou Springs — a picturesque town near Colorado Springs — was that

this was not a typical marketing seminar. The CSA is comprised of a close-knit group of business owners from around the country who seem to be in it for more than just a trade membership with occasional informative conferences. These men and women truly seem to know each other well and actually like each other, and it shows in how they operate — almost like a support group. They attend several seminars like this one each year, but they stay in touch on a weekly basis, holding GoToMeetings every Tuesday to bounce ideas off each other, talk through difficult business situations and even role play to help each other through the ins and outs of running a business.

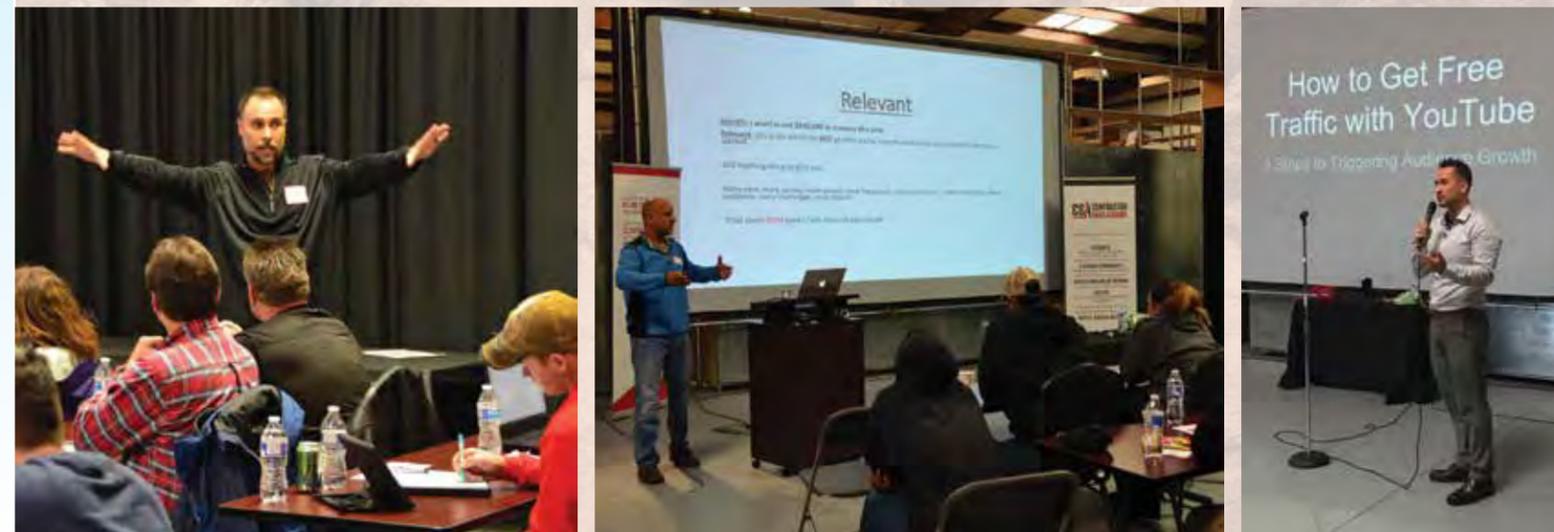
Tom Reber, the creator of MOTORhard.com, and Steve Shinholser, the owner of Premier Ponds, are the experts

behind the CSA who organize, motivate and hold accountable the members who seek to increase their bottom line, optimize their time and improve their mindsets to better ensure profitability and success.

Marketing is Business

One of the main takeaways for me that essentially summed up the seminar was the idea that if you own a business, you are a marketer. So when these folks use the term "marketing," it encompasses a variety of capabilities, from operations to employee relations to time management.

After the welcome dinner Friday night, the seminar kicked off bright and early on Saturday with a marathon of guest speakers, small-group workshops and open



Stan "Dirt Monkey" Genadek (left) discusses YouTube marketing. Phil Sarros (middle) speaks about navigating the sales pipeline, and Keith Kalfas (left) dives further into YouTube.



Bart Combs (left) speaks about the mindset for success. Steve Shinholser, Lora Lee Gelles and Tom Reber (right) with "Wilson," which stands for the importance of relationships.



forums that covered the gamut of operating a business for the approximately 50 CSA members in attendance.

Neil Kristianson, who owned a remodeling company for 13 years, led off the conference with a talk about how to generate quality leads. He discussed many different ways to market yourself and optimize your time to help close sales and generate referrals.

The rest of the morning focused on using video to enhance your business. Stan "Dirt Monkey" Genadek discussed the importance of generating YouTube content

and tagging it so that it appears in search engine results. Phil Sarros then focused on how to purposefully and responsibly navigate your sales pipeline to generate proposals that lead to sales in the shortest amount of time. Keith Kalfas rounded out the morning with tips on how to personalize and target your online videos to draw in new customers.

After a working lunch that included a special presentation by SOLKOA President Bart Combs and some small-group workshops, the afternoon featured presenta-

tions by Art Snarzyk on the psychology of marketing and how to utilize the psychology of consumer behavior; a talk by Logan Shinholser about the importance of having a solid Facebook page; and discussions led by Laura Reale, Jake Harris and David Nelson about diversifying your leads and being patient when it comes to waiting for marketing payoffs.

Breakout sessions were scattered throughout the day, featuring some smaller-group, question-and-answer consultations and personalized analyses of Facebook



Neil Kristianson talks about the customer journey.

pages and marketing material.

Overall, it was great to be invited to this unique event and witness how this intimate group of colleagues leverages their personal and professional relationships to excel in their respective lines of business. Members of the CSA demonstrate a high level of commitment and certainly seem to reap the benefits of frequent interaction with a group of dedicated, passionate peers who are looking to optimize their businesses. **CS**



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Tips for Keeping Uncle Sam at Bay

by **Mark Battersby**

Since 2010, small-business owners have seen a significant uptick in reasonable compensation challenges, as the IRS has increasingly trained its tax examiners to examine payroll tax issues — among them, reasonable compensation. After all, the payment of a salary in excess of what the IRS considers “reasonable,” the payment of personal expenses by the business, and salary paid to a relative who performs no services for the business can all result in a so-called constructive dividend in the eyes of the IRS.

Unfortunately, the owners of many garden and pond businesses rarely have sufficient documentation to back up their numbers. Not too surprisingly, the IRS will typically set a high number — usually near the Social Security maximum — if it determined that the reported salary is not defensible. But what exactly is “reasonable?”

Limited Liability vs. S Corporations

In a sole proprietorship, all income from the pond operation or business goes into the owner’s pocket, while

expenses are paid from those pockets, and anything left is labeled as profits and taxed. Although a sole proprietor is often legitimately called an employee of the business, in reality, the owner is the business.

Largely due to liability considerations, the sole proprietorship is becoming increasingly rare. Today, the limited liability (LLC and LLP) entities are most often selected by new small businesses. The S corporation, however, remains the single most popular entity, affording flexibility and some protection from liability.

An S corporation is simply an incorporated pond retailer, distributor or builder that has chosen S corporation status. In general, an S corporation does not pay income tax. Instead, the corporation’s income and deductions are passed through to shareholders, much like a partnership. The shareholders report the income and deductions on their own income tax returns.

Unfortunately, when it comes to an incorporated pond business, the tax treatment of a dividend can be harsh. It’s not deductible by a regular corporation, but it is income to the shareholder or recipient. An incorporated pond business does not have to formally declare a dividend for the owner or shareholder to face a bill for a taxable dividend. In fact, there doesn’t even have to be a distribution.

“Reasonable” Compensation

When it comes to S corporations, the IRS believes that to the extent the owners perform services for their business, the business is required by law to pay that owner a reasonable salary as



Taxation
Without
Frustration

compensation for those services. In addition, and crucially, that reasonable salary is subject to self-employment tax.

The IRS' goal is to prevent S-corporation owners from exploiting a payroll tax loophole by requiring them to pay themselves reasonable compensation for their services before taking distributions. As a result, the main focus of IRS examination of the tax returns of S corporations — and all incorporated businesses — over the past decade or so has focused on determining whether the compensation amount paid to the owner was "reasonable" based on the services provided.

The courts, including one case that went all the way to the Supreme Court, have consistently supported the IRS's methodology, while shedding light on the many issues involved. The bottom line is, the amount of reasonable compensation taken must be reasonable for all the services the pond business owner performs, and that reasonable compensation is triggered by distributions — not profit or loss.

Determining "reasonable" has been made more difficult because neither the IRS nor our lawmakers have provided business owners with adequate specific guidance. Obviously, pond business owners must pay themselves, but how much? Among the factors the IRS and the courts will weigh in making its reasonable salary determination include compensation of nonowner employees, past salary history, industry formulas and the financial condition of the business.

However, even though all these factors are considered, the

most heavily-weighted consideration appears to be summarized as the replacement cost to the business of hiring an outside party to perform the duties of the business owner.

In a recent court case,



(H.W. Johnson, Inc., T.C. Memo. 2016-95), the taxpayer was able to show the court that salaries were not excessive. The two brothers managed the business and received salaries of some \$2 million each in 2003 and \$3.6 million each in 2004. The Court noted the brothers increased sales from 2002 to 2004 from \$23 million to \$38 million and managed to keep the business operating efficiently during a time when similar businesses in their locale and field faced financial difficulties. The court also noted that the business had a formula for determining bonuses and dividends, and the brothers stuck to that formula.

"Reasonable" in the Eye of the Beholder

Questions about salaries paid to the owner-employee include whether payroll taxes have been or should have been withheld; whether those

distributions have, more accurately, been labeled as dividend payments; and will the business be penalized with the dreaded "Accumulated Earnings Tax," because it keeps profits in the business rather than paying

those profits to the owner-employee in the form of either wages or dividends.

Generally, the owner-employee of a profitable pond business should receive both wages and dividends. The business can reward owner-employees with both bonuses and fringe benefits, although favoring the owner-employee at the expense of others within the business is a definite no-no in the eyes of the IRS.

Owner-employees must, of course, include some — but not all — of the amounts received from their business in their taxable income, although the tax rate usually varies depending on the type of payment. The pond business can generally claim a tax deduction for some but, again, not all those amounts distributed or paid to owner-employees as wages or salaries. Dividends paid by the business to shareholders are not tax-deductible by the business.

Dividends as Employee Compensation

As mentioned, the profits of a closely-held pond retailer, distributor or builder can be distributed as wages or as dividends. Double-taxation, once at the corporate level and once at the shareholder level, is an expensive problem for many owner-employees.

Typically, a closely-held, incorporated business avoids double-taxation by paying most of its profits in the form of a bonus, or by leaving profits in the business as accumulated earnings. The IRS, obviously, has a field day recharacterizing bonuses as nondeductible dividends. The nonpayment of sufficient dividends relative to profits can subject incorporated pond businesses to the accumulated earnings tax — a penalty for retaining already-taxed profits in the business rather than distributing them as dividends.

Reasonable, Reasonable Compensation

The IRS and the courts frequently scrutinize the year-end bonuses paid to owner-employees because of the possibility of a disguised dividend. Each year, the IRS reminds incorporated businesses, including S corporations, that they must pay reasonable compensation to shareholder-employees in return for the services that they provide to the incorporated pond business before a nonwage distribution may be made to that shareholder-employee.

The tax treatment of fringe benefits paid to employees of an S corporation is different from owner-employees who are not shareholders, or

who own 2 percent or less of the outstanding S corporation stock. The fringe benefits paid non-shareholder employees are tax-free. They are excluded from the employee's taxable wages. Those non-shareholder fringe benefits are deductible by the corporation.

Employee-owners owning more than 2 percent of the S corporation stock, on the other hand, are not considered employees for fringe-benefit purposes, and their fringe benefits may not be tax-free. Owners of more than 2 percent of the corporation are treated in the same manner as partners in a partnership.

Self-Employment Tax Questions Lead to More Questions

Although shareholders of a so-called S corporation are treated much in the same

manner as partners, they are not subject to the self-employment tax on their share of the S corporation's ordinary income attributable to the operation of the business. After all, a corporation is a separate entity for tax purposes.

Provided an S-corporation shareholder is an employee who has received an actual distribution, the only remaining questionable area is what is a "reasonable" amount for that particular shareholder-employee. Whether amounts paid for services provided are "reasonable compensation" depends on all relevant facts and circumstances.

So-called "reasonable compensation" has always been

an issue for incorporated businesses. With the Accumulated Earnings Tax raised from 15 percent to 20 percent of an operation's accumulated earnings, reasonable compensation that is too high for regular C corporations but too low for S corporations is rapidly becoming an issue.

While promises of tax reform continue to float in Washington, the only changes likely to have an impact on the compensation of pond retailers, distributors or builders are the promised lower tax rates. In order to both profit from and avoid the potential pitfalls of reasonable compensation in the face of accumulated earnings, early planning is essential before an audit results in headaches and expensive penalties.

Seeking professional guid-

ance for reaping those tax breaks due can ensure that you, the owner-employee of the pond business, don't run afoul of the tax laws. The need for professional assistance can't be emphasized enough, as the IRS is watching. ☞

With 25 years of professional experience in the fields of taxes and finance, Mr. Battersby writes on unique and topical subjects in the industry. Although no reputable professional should ever render specific advice at arm's length, he does craft unbiased, interesting, informative and accurate articles. Mr. Battersby currently writes for publications in a variety of fields. His topical columns are syndicated in many publications each week. He also writes columns for trade magazines and has authored four books.

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The newly expanded Distribution and Commercial Sales Team. Clockwise from the top: James Chubb, Jeff Moskal, Adam Raabe and Dave Elmendorf.

GeoGlobal Partners, a Division of OASE, Announces Newly Expanded Distribution and Commercial Sales Team

GeoGlobal Partners, the North American division of OASE, is pleased to announce and introduce the newly expanded Distribution and Commercial Sales Team. The new team is dedicated to partnering with customers to help grow their business by providing them with innovative and high quality water gardening, indoor aquatics and lake management products.

Effective May 15, James Chubb joins the team in the role of Rockies & mid-south regional sales manager. Mr. Chubb brings with him 28 years of sales experience and 17 years in the green industry creating water features. He also brings experience with sales and training as a manufacturer and a distributor. He was previously a guest speaker at the Oregon Landscape Contractor Association show in Portland, Oregon, the GIE/Hardscape International Show in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Pro Green Show in Denver, Colorado.

In February 2017, Jeff Moskal joined the team as southeast regional sales manager. Mr. Moskal brings an extensive sales-focused background, with over 20 years of experience in the landscape and irrigation industries. A LEED Green Associate, he is also an alumnus of State University of New York at Delhi, with a degree in turf science and golf course operations.

In the fall of 2016, Dave Elmendorf assumed the role of southwest regional sales manager. Mr. Elmendorf, a California native, brings over 25 years of sales experience. Also joining the OASE distribution and commercial sales team last year was Adam Raabe, who brings over 12 years of sales and experience within the aquatics industry. Mr. Raabe joined the team after the acquisition of the biOrb brand by OASE.

“We are very excited to be able to expand our sales team and increase the presence of the OASE brand in the North American market,” said Frayne McAtee, director of sales for distribution and commercial.

The new team members join the current and dedicated team of Regional Sales Managers Todd Rosendahl (Northwestern region) and Gregory Schutte Jr. (Northeast region). The overall sales team is strongly supported by Shannon Wenzel, sales operations manager, and Matthew Zitani, product manager.

Your Pond Farm 2017 TRADESHOW

2017 Dates Announced for Your Pond Farm Trade Show

Your Pond Farm has announced its 2017 trade show dates. The 2017 Your Pond Farm Trade Show will take place from Oct. 17-18 at the picturesque Bear Creek Mountain Resort in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. Your Pond Farm will be revealing what to expect for the upcoming season. There will be live music, giveaways and more. Do not miss this educational, fun event!

RSVP today by calling 877/412-FARM (3276).



Aquascope Inc. Celebrates Healthiest Company in America Award

Aquascope Inc. is proud to announce national recognition as one of the Healthiest Companies in America by Interactive Health, a national leader known for its personalized wellness solutions. Aquascope is one of 156 companies across the country being recognized for helping employees make significant and sometimes life-saving changes to improve their health. This is the second year Aquascope has won the award.

Aquascope participants in Interactive Health’s wellness program receive a thorough health evaluation to identify risk and learn about their health status. Through a combination of rapid outreach, connection to personal physicians and tailored resources, a personalized course of action is delivered to the participant, resulting in improved or maintained health. In addition, Aquascope provides numerous options for employees to improve fitness, including an on-site fitness facility, access to personal training services, a spa area and more.

For more information on Aquascope products and services, visit www.aquascopeinc.com. For more information on the Healthiest Companies in America, visit www.interactivehealthinc.com/client-success/healthiest-companies.

Kodama Koi Farm Releasing New Look for Kodama Koi Food

On July 1, Kodama Koi Farm, a high quality Japanese Koi distributor and supplier, is launching the new Kodama Koi Food All Season & Color Up. The new innovative packaging comes in compact boxes with individually sealed bags, allowing you to use just the right amount without getting your hands dirty, while maintaining the freshness of the food. All Season comes in semi-glossy, snow-white boxes, and Color Up comes in semi-glossy vibrant-red boxes. Both boxes have a simple, yet eye-catching design that evokes the vibrant red and white colors of the Kohaku Koi.

“Our Koi Food has been on the market as long as our farm has been in the U.S.,” company president Taro Kodama said. “Many of our customers enjoy the quality of the food, and the food has been producing many champion koi in the U.S. I do not want to limit the benefit of our koi food only to our customers. It is time to let more people understand the importance of koi food for their koi and themselves. So we decided to develop a friendlier packaging with minimalistic, yet stylish looks. We would like to introduce our new Kodama Koi Food to retailers nationwide.”



For more info:
Kodama Koi Farm
808/354-7031
info@kodamakoifarm.com

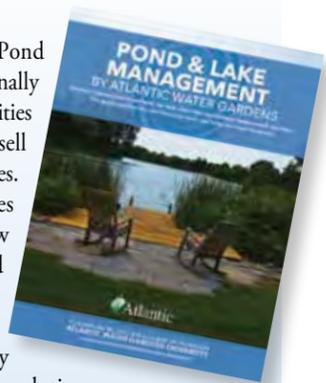
Pond & Lake Management Booklet by Atlantic Water Gardens

Atlantic Water Gardens’ new Pond & Lake Management booklet is finally here, and it’s packed with the necessities to help you explain, specify and sell water clarity in larger pond and lakes.

The full-color manual includes essential information about how subsurface aeration works and how to size and implement these systems. It also includes complete product information for easy specification of the perfect aeration solution.

Furthermore, the eight-page booklet covers most maintenance challenges in ponds and lakes ranging from 1/8 to 4 surface acres in size. Six complete systems are included, each with nickel-plated brass and stainless hardware, easily rebuildable compressors, double-walled cabinets and innovative diffusers to circulate more water. These systems are effective, easy to install and profitable — and the Pond & Lake Management booklet is all you’ll need to sell them. Pick up one free of charge at your local distributor, or contact info@atlanticwatergardens.com.

For more information, contact:
James Lavery, Atlantic Water Gardens
330/274-8317 ext 19
james@atlanticwatergardens.com
www.atlanticwatergardens.com



Donald P. Kenney Appointed Franklin Electric President, North America Water Systems

Franklin Electric Co. has appointed Donald P. Kenney the president, North America Water Systems. In this role, Mr. Kenney will be responsible for all aspects of the North America Water Systems business that supports the sale of Franklin Electric products to customers in Canada, the United States, Mexico and Central America.



Mr. Kenney was hired as F.E. Petro employee No. 5 in 1991. Over the years, he has assumed increasing levels of responsibility, becoming president of F.E. Petro in 2001, and then president of Franklin Fueling Systems in 2005. In 2013, Mr. Kenney was appointed the vice president of Franklin Electric Co. and promoted to president, energy systems.

Matala Power-Cyclone Vacuum Continuous Pond Vacuum with Power Discharge

This contractor-grade continuous vacuum is designed to vacuum large ponds.

The innovative Power-Cyclone has two motors. The suction motor vacuums up to 1,500 gph.

The internal discharge motor is 1 HP and is capable of discharging water under pressure up to 18 feet in elevation. The motors’ flow rates are balanced, so the vacuum job is continuous and uninterrupted.

The 6-foot extension pipe, along with 26 feet of suction hose, allows for easy handling during even your biggest pond vacuum jobs. Four vacuum heads of different sizes are included. Thirty-two feet of exhaust hose allows the waste water to be pumped to any elevation up to 18 feet high. The total working distance is more than 60 feet.

The Gravel Vacuum Head is a new option available. This vacuum-cone head attaches to the end of the suction pipe and can be used to clean a gravel-bottom pond without draining the whole pond or removing any fish. It cleans gravel up to 3 inches deep. The Gravel Vacuum Head is also ideal for working around large rocks and plants to remove loose debris without clogging the system.

Matala USA: www.matalausa.com/Power-Cyclone-Pond-Vacuum/Power-Cyclone-Pond-Vacuum-p-251.html



AMP Lighting Introduces the HydraPro™ – a New Modular Approach to Landscape Lighting

AMP Lighting, a leading direct-to-professional manufacturer of landscape lighting products, announces a new modular approach to landscape lighting. The approach uses a waterproof, cast-brass, LED module — the HydraPro. This compact and durable unit features attachment points for the various mounting pieces needed for conversion to a well light, an in-grade light and an underwater light.

AMP has consolidated its product components in taking this novel, modular approach to lighting solutions. By creating a module that satisfies the performance targets of several products,

AMP is better able to maintain inventory, control cost and keep prices low.

One of the most striking features of the new HydraPro modules is the proprietary waterproof construction. While most underwater lights use thin o-rings or gaskets, which are prone to leaking, the new AMP module incorporates a unique combination of hefty compression seals. A further

measure is the use of conformal coating on the LED boards that is specifically designed to protect the circuits from condensation.

The modules feature the best high-output Cree LEDs and integrates them into a proprietary driver circuitry. This results in a very high light output — more than 900 lumens — because underwater fixtures need extra light to punch through the water. The other HydraPro fixtures incorporate AMP ONE Technology into the driver. This technology allows the designer to use the Design-Master remote control to adjust to the perfect light level.

The HydraPro systems also allow designers to adjust beam angles as needed. Interchangeable optics range from a 12-degree narrow spot to a 60-degree wide flood. All three HydraPro fixtures represent the best performing and most reliable waterproof lights available anywhere.

The new module is available in the following AMP ONE fixtures: The HydraPro Well Light, the HydraPro In-Grade Light and the HydraPro Underwater Light.

For more information, visit www.amplighting.com or call 813/978-3900.



YARDMAX Plate Compactors

YARDMAX, a manufacturer of affordable yet high-quality outdoor power equipment, will soon be shipping its newly released plate compactors. Ideal for packing down loose aggregate, these plate compactors lengthen the life of your project by reducing water seepage, swelling and erosion and ensuring optimal foundation density. YARDMAX plate compactors are available in three models, boasting compaction forces of 1,850 pounds, 2,500 pounds and 3,000 pounds. All models include enhanced design features as standard, with no upcharge.

Special features include:

- Stamped one-piece steel plate that has no weld beads to prevent rust over time;
- Fold-up transport wheels;
- Three-point, mounted handle with rubber bushings to absorb vibration;
- Collapsible handle for compact storage;
- Stamping pad to act as a buffer between plate and stamping surface for more delicate surfaces;
- Recoil ignition for easy, consistent starting; and
- Centrifugal flyweight for superior engine control.

For more information, please visit www.yardmax.com



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Tropical Science Biolabs Introduces New PondKeeper Product Line of All-Natural Pond Additives

Since 1968, we've specialized in the research, development and manufacturing of all-natural water conditioners. Stemming from that rich experience, Tropical Science Biolabs is pleased to introduce our new PondKeeper product line of all-natural pond additives to help the beginner or veteran pond owner start or maintain their pond without the use of dangerous chemicals, pesticides or toxic residues. Our new PondKeeper pond additives include Pond Starter, Rapid Cycle, Immune Boost and Sludge Control.

Pond Starter will remove or detoxify chlorine, chloramines, ammonia and heavy metals in one easy step. It will also replenish the slime coat of fish.

Rapid Cycle establishes strong natural filtration with a concentrated, non-pathogenic, aerobic, nitrifying bacteria blend, which processes toxic ammonia and nitrite created by food and fish waste and reduces the cycle time.

Immune Boost is a full-spectrum disease treatment and prevention that uses five different strains of natural probiotic bacteria in addition to vitamins, antioxidants and nutrients to boost your fish's immune system and ability to heal. It also promotes and enhances endurance, strength, energy, alertness, brain function and color, while protecting against stress.

Sludge Control is a waste-management system that contains billions of live, beneficial, sludge-oxidizing bacteria in five different strains to provide full-spectrum elimination of excess proteins, uneaten food, fish feces and organic sludge layers all year long. It also contains a blue UV block that will screen UV light without inhibiting plant growth or turning your pond an odd blue color.

Due to their natural ingredients, overdosing with PondKeeper products will not harm your fish or plants.

For more info:
Michael Anderson
602/255-0166 ext. 120
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Nathan Haislip
Facilities Manager and Lead Keeper
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