LEVEL UP
Creative designing to the next degree p. 38

Trees Near Ponds p.14 | Make a Splash With Spillways p.50 | Taxation Without Frustration p.60
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20 Clear Water, Healthy 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

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.

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.
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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 featured 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 Pond feature by Levi Crouse delves into the specifics of water purity 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.

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!
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 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...
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 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 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.

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 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...
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.

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

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.
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.

Pros & Cons
On the plus side is shade — it’s 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

by Max Phelps,
Rock Castles Landscaping
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 kentukea); 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 shade of a white fringe tree. At bottom, the same feature — 10 years later — is in excellent shade.
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 ineffective 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 underlay-ment 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.

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.

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 INFOFANZA 2010, and he is the author of the twice-monthly landscape column “Yards to Paradise.”

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Language of Koi

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.

Clear Water, Healthy Koi

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

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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 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 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
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 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 pondscapes 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.

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.

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July/August 2017
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
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 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...
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 algae-control. That act is helped by using an algae-cide. A very effective product is one that contains no metal, is non-foaming, and is 60-percent Poly [oxyethylene (dimethylimino) ethylene-(dimethylimino) isethionic acid]. 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 statury 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 encap-sulate 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

AquaMeds HPH.indd   1
AquaMeds HPH.indd   1
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 through 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.
Vianti Falls Spillways

The Vianti Falls system adds beauty to any block wall with the simple elegance of its cascading water. A stainless steel spillway creates a soothing sheet of water and pouring scuppers are tasteful accents to the feature’s focal point. Vianti Falls spillways and scuppers by EasyPro are a stylish highlight for any patio, entry way or stand alone feature. Illuminate for a stunning night time display.

• Internal baffles create the smooth sheet of water that cascades to the basin below
• Open flow design prevents clogging from debris or hard water
• High quality stainless steel construction resists corrosion
• Three lip styles 2", 6" or 15"; and several widths from 11.5" to 71.5"

Scuppers

These pouring scuppers are tasteful accents to a complete formal water feature. A low volume of water pours from the spout highlighting the feature’s focal point.

All stainless steel Vianti Falls spillways and scuppers are proudly made in the USA.

Waterfall Diffuser Spillways

New aeration kits provide some Koi Loving Care for your pond

Features:
Supplying adequate oxygen levels and circulation during hot summer months or de-icing during freezing months is critical for pond and fish care. Four new aeration kits will provide these benefits to water gardens and koi ponds up to 30,000 gallons. Complete kits include KLC compressor with 6’ power cord, rubber membrane diffuser(s) and Quick Sink weighted tubing.

Aeration kits powered by new Stratus KLC series compressors.

New KLC compressors combine outstanding performance with great value!
- Dual linear diaphragm design provides maximum air output
- Five models from 1.3 to 4.9 cfm capabilities
- Quiet, energy efficient operation for just pennies per day
- CUL and UL listed for outdoor use
- Three year warranty

New tent features:
• Available in 8’ x 10’ and 10’ x 14’ size — much larger than other common covers
• Sturdy fiberglass poles are larger in diameter for increased strength
• Strong 3/8” UV resistant, nylon mesh will last for years — fine mesh will keep out most debris
• Full 12” wide band around bottom with down loops for added strength and durability
• Mesh is secured to frame with full length sleeves rather than plastic clips
• Simple assembly can be completed in minutes

Visit our website to view or request 2017 catalogs: www.easypropondproducts.com/catalogs
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?
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 ambiance 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 to 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.

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.

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

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!
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...
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, prefilter 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 ½-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 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 circulate bottom water in an attempt 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 3,600 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.
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 biofilter has a 57-watt, downflow UV light 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.

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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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...
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. 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 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.

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*These bowls were created with privacy in mind and carry with them an array of relaxing sounds.*

(Living Water Landscape Service, Chris Ostrander)

*These hanging bowls create a mesmerizing visual effect.*

(Genoscapes, Joey Genovese)

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

(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.

(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.)
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 the entrance to your office, consider the subtle pizzazz of a spillway and some flowing water.

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

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.

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

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

Neil Kristianson, who owned a remodel- ing company for 13 years, led off the confer- ence 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 Kallas 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 presentations by Art Sznarzek on the psychology of marketing and how to utilize the psychol- ogy 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 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 profes- sional 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 inter- action with a group of dedicated, passionate peers who are looking to optimize their businesses.
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
compensation for those services. In addition, and crucially, that reason is subject to what is known as self-employment tax.

The IRS’s goal is to prevent S-corporation owners from exploiting a payroll tax loophole by requiring them to pay their owners yourselves 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 summed 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, 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 (H.W. Johnson, Inc., T.C. Memo. 2016-95), the taxpayer 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.

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-taxable 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

Although shareholders of 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.

Questions Lead to More Questions

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 avoid 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 guidance 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.
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.

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“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 Raabe Jr., president of GeoGlobal Partners.

The newly expanded Distribution and Commercial Sales Team. Clockwise from the top: James Chubb, Jeff Moskal, Adam Raabe and Dave Elmendorf.
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 look. We would like to introduce our new Kodama Koi Food to retailers nationwide.”

For more info:
Kodama Koi Farm
808/354-7031
info@kodamakoinc.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
330/274-8117 ext 19
james@atlanticwatergardens.com
www.atlanticwatergardens.com

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 integrate 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.

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

Franklin Electric Co. has appointed Donald P. Kenney the president of 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 promoted to president of Franklin Fueling Systems and to the position of president of the newly formed Franklin Electric North America Water Systems as well.

Over the years, Mr. Kenney had also 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 promoted to 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 15 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/Pond-Cyclone-Pond-Vacuum/Power-Cyclone-Pond-Vacuum-p-251.html

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 beats to prevent rust over time.
- Fold-up transport wheels;
- Three-point, mounted handle with rubber bushings to absorb vibration; collapsible handle for compact storage;
- Stamped 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, visit www.yardmax.com.

For more information, contact:
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james@atlanticwatergardens.com
www.atlanticwatergardens.com

808/354-7031
info@kodamakoinc.com
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 conditions. 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 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, unsooted 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
mike@tsbiolabs.com
FINAL THOUGHT...

Helloooo Summer!

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Feed Manufacturer Number: Z002943
Turtles and tortoises are the planet’s most endangered vertebrates, and the Turtle Survival Center is the last hope for some of the rarest species. Our goal is zero extinctions, so we try to simulate their natural habitat. To do so, we need water pumps that can handle the murkiness of the job. The Little Giant® F-Series pumps meet all my needs. They are energy efficient, ideal in almost any application, easy to clean, and environmentally safe.