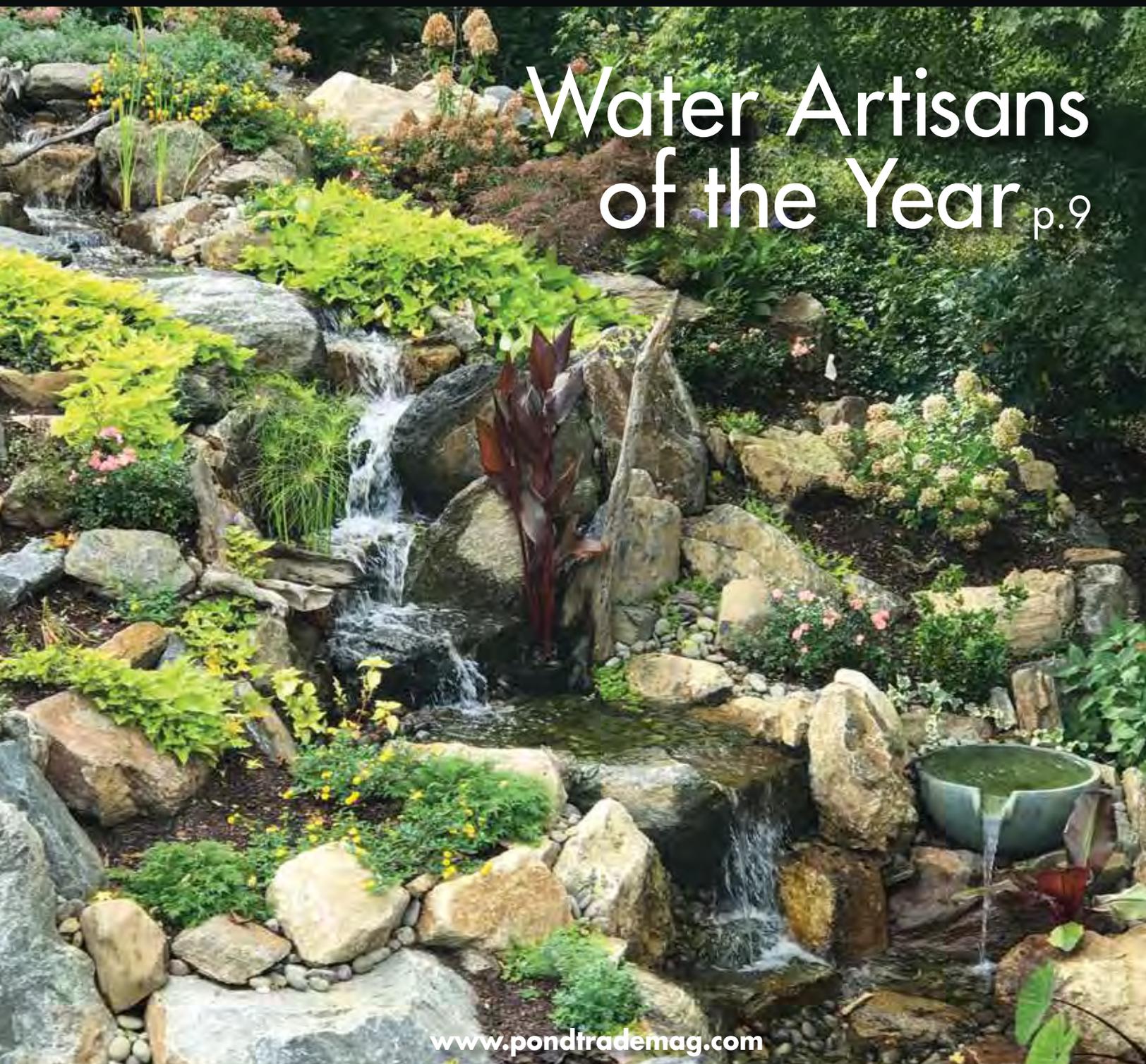


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Water Artisans of the Year p.9



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FEATURES

9 Water Artisans of the Year

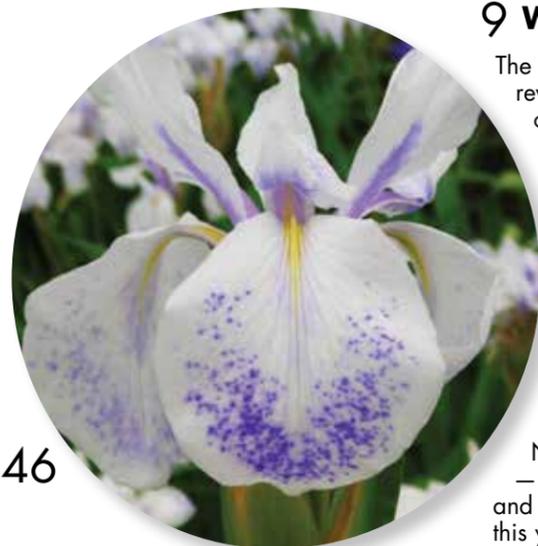
The verdict is in! Our editor, **Jordan Morris**, performs the "big reveal" once again. Check out which projects and artisans wowed our judging panel and won the 2017 pond season.

21 Aquatic Authorities

Our all-new "Supreme Stream Court" handpicked this year's winners from more than 50 project entries. The competencies of our judges covered the spectrum of the water-gardening industry, and we at POND Trade were honored to work with such a reputable group of evaluators.

23 Honorable Mentions

No decision was unanimous in any of this year's five categories — best pondless, best large scale, best under \$15k, most artistic and best waterfall. See what we mean with these profile snapshots of this year's incredibly impressive runners-up.



46



29 The Foundation of Why POND CONSTRUCTION

Christopher Bell takes a big-picture look at the pond construction industry — not focusing on the "how-to" or best methods of building a pond, but instead on the broader question of why pond-builders do what they do. His introspective view includes a gallery of his and his colleagues' stunning work.

34 Catch the Rainbow LANGUAGE OF KOI

If you have an eye for color and an appreciation for koi, this is the article for you. **Ellen Kloubec** discusses the vibrant appearance of Nishikigoi and explains how each type got its name according to their Japanese roots. She also recounts a brief history of the variety, adding a little color to how koi ponds became so eye-catching in the first place.

40 Over and Out

Every business owner has his or her own story about how they started their company and why they do what they do, day in and day out. But when you're ready to sell your company, what do you do to ensure you get the kind of return you deserve? Just ask **Steve Shinholser**, who is currently in the process of selling his company, Premier Ponds.

46 An Eye for an Iris

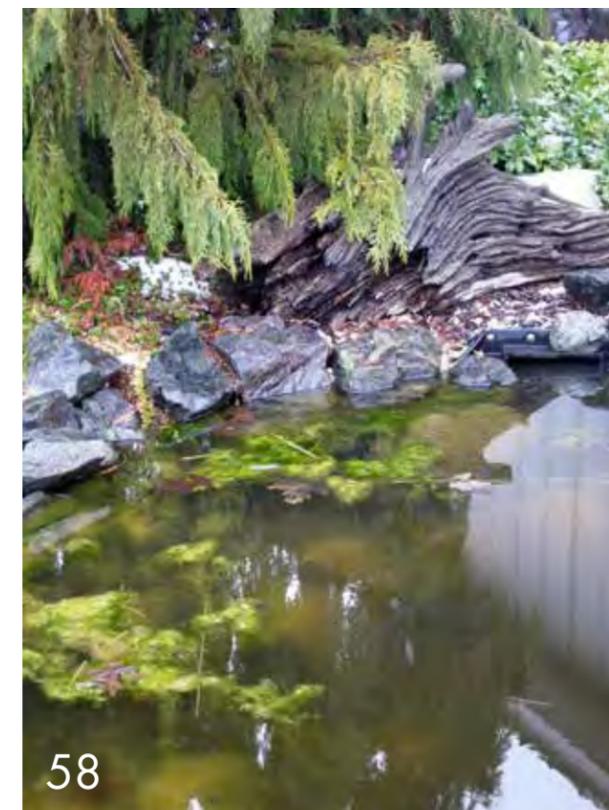
It's often called the "true aquatic plant." Let **Chad Harris** take you on a tour of the popular pond staple, which surprisingly can be just as versatile as it is beautiful. Don't let its beauty intimidate you — irises can thrive in more locations than you may think.

52 The Endangered Sanctuary

Kent Wallace is a regular POND Trade contributor, typically detailing his consulting and advisory services for his clients' pond builds. He tells a bit of a different story in this issue, when he actually took part in a one-of-a-kind build to create an airlift system for an endangered species, the Pahrump poolfish.

58 Achoo!

"Gin-clear water" is something that all pond owners can get behind (... some more than others). **Rick Smith** relies on the K.I.S.S. principle to achieve this level of crystal clearness and rehab ailing ponds that can't seem to clear up on their own. Use his Diagnostic Punch List to massacre the murkiness in any pond.



DEPARTMENTS

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Upcoming Events

2018

March 3 - 4

**Koi Club of San Diego
30th Annual Koi Show**
Del Mar Fairgrounds
Del Mar, California
www.koiclubofsandiego.com

March 9 - 11

The Central Florida Koi & Goldfish Show
Avanti Palms Resort Hotel
Orlando, Florida
www.cfks.org

June 26 - 28

SuperZoo 2017
Mandalay Bay Convention Center
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.superzoo.org

August 14-16

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

August 22 - 26

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

September 5 - 6

Atlantic Professional Conference
Bertram Inn & Conference Center
Cleveland, Ohio
atlanticwatergardens.com/apc-adc-program

September 13 - 16

IWGS Symposium
San Angelo Visitors Center Complex
San Angelo, Texas
www.iwgs.org

October 17 - 19

Hardscapes / GIE+EXPO 2018
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www.gie-expo.com
www.hardscapena.com

October 31 - November 2

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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@acceleratedcontent.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

I Love a Winner!

I think you will, too. Our Water Artisans of the Year issue is quickly becoming one of my favorite issues of the year. It blows me away to see all the talent out there. I get the honor of reviewing and sorting out all the submissions so the judges can evaluate them without knowing the identities of the artisans. In a word, you guys are GOOD.



We had a few bumps in the contest this year. We upped the degree of difficulty by allowing only one category submission per project. However, you guys turned the tables on us, making the evaluation process a little tougher for our judges. Specifically, the results for a couple of the categories were incredibly close. The core competencies of our judges were especially diverse this year, and this led to a wide range of opinions,

assessments and votes. That is to say, the panel had a lot to love about many of this year's entries. That led to some pretty interesting results, with just one or two votes separating the winner from the runner-up in a couple of the categories.

We've designated most of this issue to the contest, so turn the next few pages to meet the winners, runners-up and judges. We'd like to thank this year's judging panel for doing a solid, nonpartisan job of choosing the second winner's circle of Water Artisans of the Year. It isn't easy ranking waterscape projects based on aesthetics alone, without any knowledge of the builder, the project location or the materials used in the build. But that's the way we designed it — our goal here is to serve as a fair, level playing field for all pond contractors, regardless of the size of their business' bottom line or their brand affiliations. What do you think about this year's winners? Take to our website comment section, or drop us a line with your feedback.

This issue isn't all about the contest, though. This is our largest issue ever, and we're jam-packed as always with relevant material to help you enhance your business. Flip over to pg. 58 to find Rick Smith's tried-and-true tips for diagnosing a cloudy, unbalanced or otherwise ailing pond. We've also got a great article from Steve Shinholser of Premier Ponds on pg. 40 with some valuable advice on how to value and sell your business. Why so valuable, you ask? Steve actually used some of these very strategies to successfully organize the sale of his own business.

Happy 2018 Pond Season to all of you — and happy PONDering!



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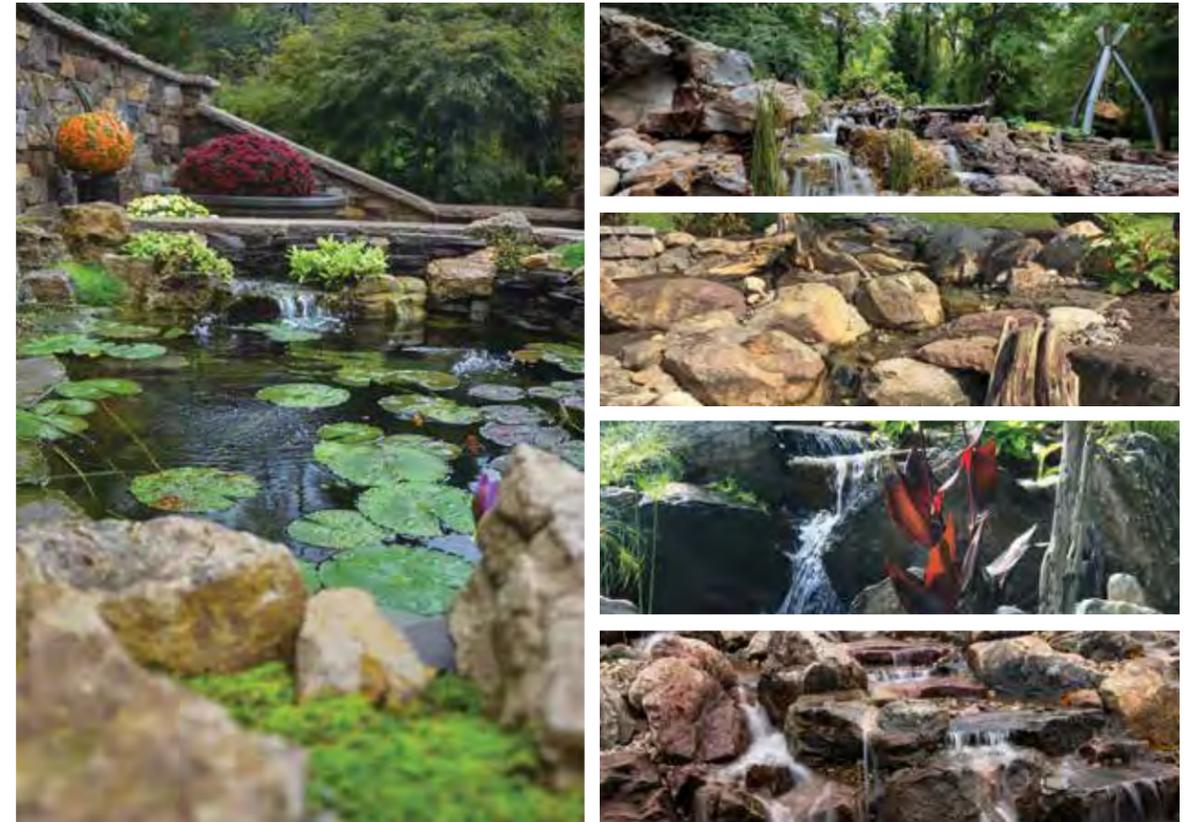
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Water Artisans



Water Artisans of the Year

Our second annual contest winners raise the bar

by Jordan Morris, Editor, POND Trade magazine

It is often said that a sequel never quite lives up to the hype of the original.

However, as you turn the next few pages, we suspect you'll agree with us in disagreeing with this common rule — maybe just this once. There's no question that our second annual Water Artisans of the Year contest packs just as much pizzazz, wonderment and showmanship as last year's inaugural contest. Overall, this year's competition, which honors the top projects of the 2017 pond season, blew our expectations out of the water, so to speak.

We pored over more than 50 project submissions in five distinct categories and presented them to the all-new independent judging panel, composed of three of last year's winners and four other

heavy-hitters around the industry. (Meet the judges on pg. 21!) We presented them with photos and specifications for each project; no brand names, locations or contractors' identities were revealed.

In the end, although there were a couple of close calls, one clear winner emerged in each of this year's categories, with four new faces and one repeat winner. The best waterfall and best pondless categories returned from last year, and we mixed it up with three new categories — best large scale, best under \$15,000 and most artistic.

Like last year, a donation to the Wounded Warrior Project was required with each submission. Thanks to you, we were proud to make a \$1,375 donation to this reputable charity for disabled veterans.

Enough formalities! It's time to reveal the most impressive pond and water-gardening projects from the 2017 season — and the artisans who crafted them. ☞



Winner Best Pondless

Tom Dieck

Tom Dieck has more than 31 years of professional experience and serves as the owner and chief designer for TRD Designs. His background includes a degree in landscape development from the State University of New York at Cobleskill and experience working in the green industry field since 1980. He is also a two-time Extreme Makeover Home Edition lead designer and a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor.

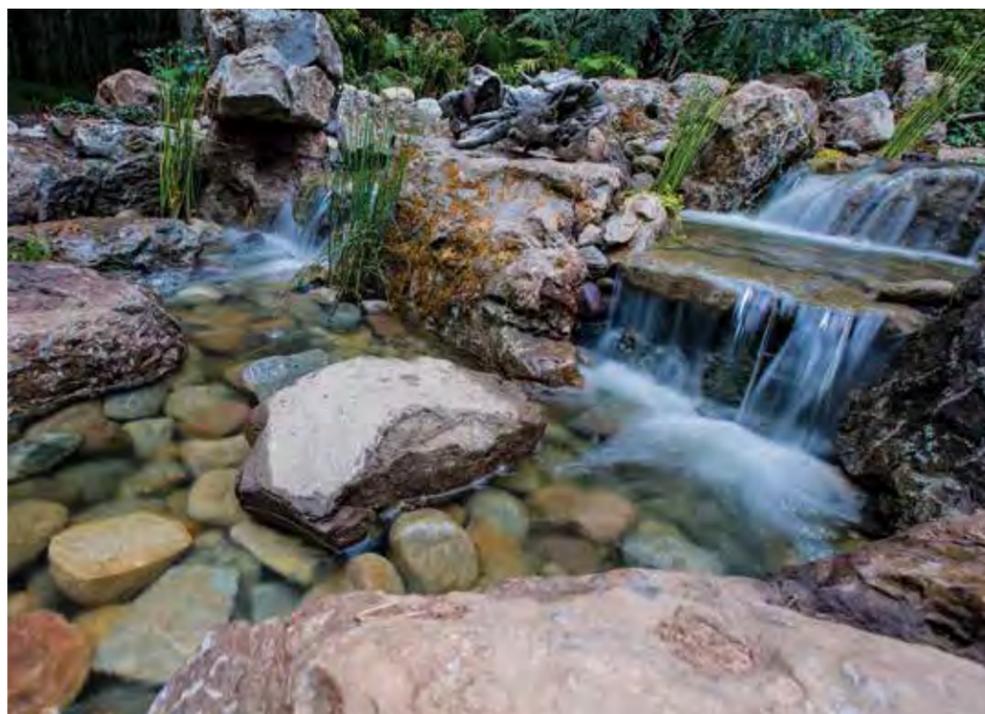
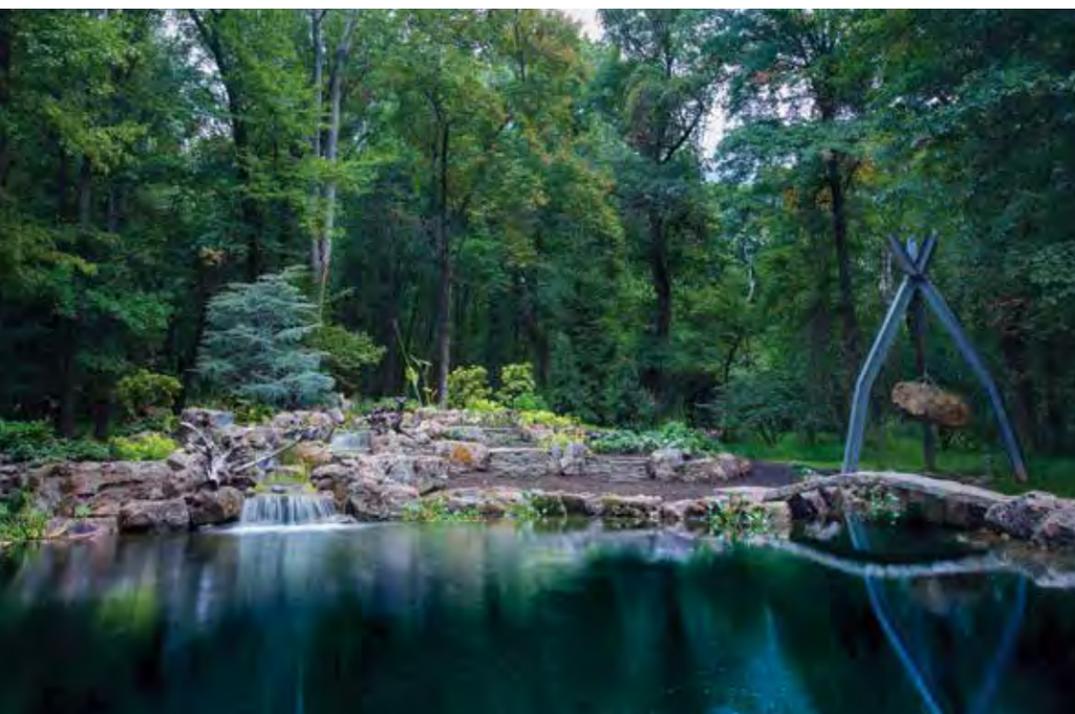
Most homeowners would see a sharp vertical ledge with a 30-foot drop on their property as a safety hazard or, at the very least, wasted real estate. But when Tom Dieck, owner and chief designer for TRD Designs, arrived on the scene, he saw it as a prime artistic opportunity.

"It was a perfect scenario to work some of our magic," Dieck said.

The transformation of this home's backyard in Rye, New York eliminates every trace of the once jagged, uneven section of underutilized landscape. In fact, the new towering waterfall, which can be admired from every room in the house, looks as though it has always originated at the back of the property. Newly installed pathways, stone stairways and an outdoor spa and pavilion lure the family outside at all hours of the day.

Dieck and his team installed two variable-speed pumps behind 18,000 pounds of boulders, carrying the water flow over multiple drops and into a subtle spillway at the bottom of the feature. At night, a carefully designed LED system illuminates the network of streams, creating a mesmerizing orchestra of sights and sounds.





Winner Best Large Scale

Brian Fitzsimmons

Fitz's Fish Ponds aims to bring beauty and serenity to the backyard in the form of water features. Owner **Brian Fitzsimmons** built his first pond at age 13 in his parents' backyard while they were away on vacation. In 2008, he started Fitz's Fish Ponds and has been growing the company ever since. Ponds, waterfalls, pondless waterfalls, water gardens — you name it, they can do it. Fitz's Fish Ponds is based in Central New Jersey, also providing service to customers in New York and Pennsylvania.

When a customer contacted Fitz's Fish Ponds about rehabilitating an eyesore on his property — a troublesome, leaky, overgrown pond with a fallen tree in the middle of it — Brian Fitzsimmons and his team took a different approach. Instead of dispatching a few employees for cleanup duty, Fitzsimmons and Mike Hall, his design and construction manager, saw a blank canvas begging for their attention.

"The challenge was to use the existing layout and keep the feel of the beautiful forest behind it," Fitzsimmons said.

After cleaning out the old pond, saving the fish, repairing the drainage issues and christening the new pond with a shiny new liner, it was time for the moss rock boulders — 50 tons of them, to be exact — to bring the multi-level waterfall system to life. The team preserved and reinforced the existing bridges in the landscape, maintaining a natural look for the pondscape.

A customized filtration system for this 30,000-gallon pond, complete with a gravel-suction grid and external pressure filter, preserves a safe, clean, sustainable habitat for the fish that call it home — and new bragging rights for the happy homeowner.





Winner Under 15k

Bobby Kenyon

C.E. Pontz Sons of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is an outdoor living expert, with some of the most creative and well-trained employees in the landscape and outdoor living industries. **Bobby Kenyon** is the creative-solutions guru. He has over a decade of experience in the landscape and water-garden industries. The company prides itself on being different — not an everyday, run-of-the mill, cookie-cutter landscaper. “Where art meets nature” is their tag line.

The central philosophy of our contest is to showcase the talents of independent water-feature contractors in an open, unbiased forum. We added this category as a special nod to the smaller projects out there, because not all works of art come with a hefty price tag.

This outdoor patio overhaul by C.E. Pontz Sons is living proof that not all stunning pondscape have to cost an arm and a leg. Lead designer Bobby Kenyon and his team created a luxe, private sitting area atop 685 sq. ft. of Belgard Lafitt pavers, set under a majestic cedar pergola for the enjoyment of this new pondless waterfall and meandering 16-foot stream.

Low-voltage LED landscape lighting gives this new living space around-the-clock character for the enjoyment of the moving water and freshly edged and mulched landscape beds. The team even hid the air conditioning unit and generator behind a 4-foot privacy panel to create the perfect aesthetic feel. A 25-foot Rosetta Belvedere retaining wall beautifully accents this stunning, full-package backyard makeover (without the full price tag).





Winner **Most Artistic**

Tim Wood

Tim Wood is a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor and the owner of Aquatic Edge Pond & Landscape Solutions, a full-service design, repair and installation company in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. He is the first two-time Water Artisans of the Year winner and has an industrywide reputation for building natural-looking water features. When he's not on the job, he frequently finds himself participating with local organizations focused on the management of lakes and ponds.

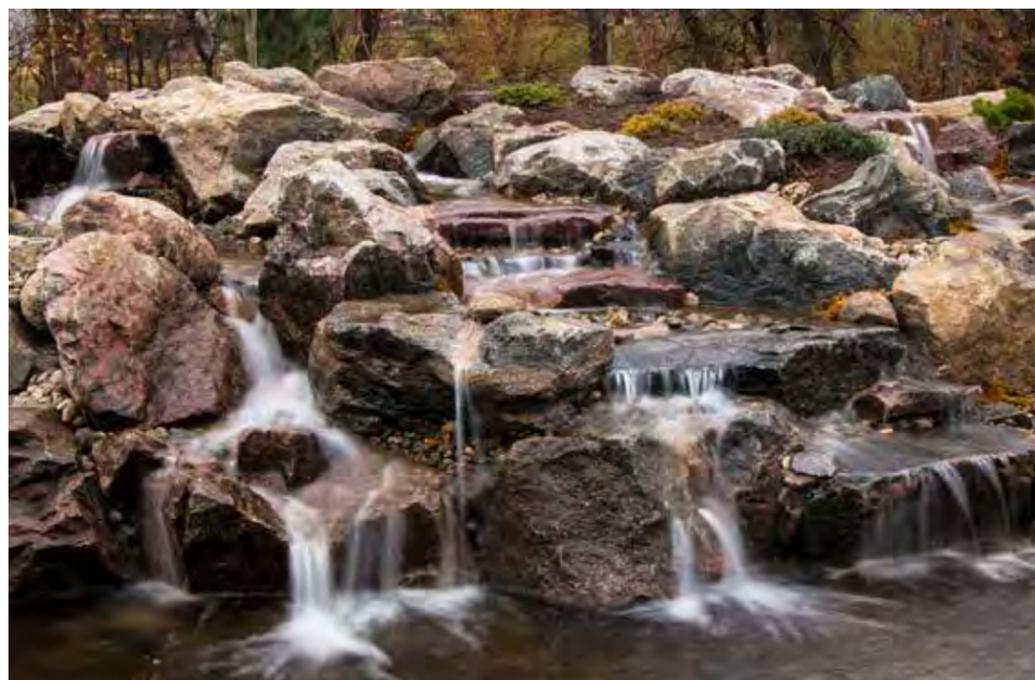
This new category created an extra level of difficulty for this year's contest. After all, artistry is a product of talent — not necessarily effort — and serves as an x-factor that is either inherently present in a work of art, or it is absent.

This 6-by-8-foot pond embedded in a backyard patio achieves a harmonious level of balance that marries the formal with the naturalistic. Tim Wood and his company, Aquatic Edge Pond & Landscape Solutions, the first and only two-time winner of our Water Artisans of the Year contest, integrated a heavy dose of stacked slate and just enough weathered limestone boulders to add a natural twist to this formal hardscape.

"We love the way the monotone, dark-purple slate contrasts with the earthy tones and texture of the weathered limestone," Wood said.

All plumbing and filtration components — including a 3,000-gph pump, jet line and bog filter — are completely hidden from sight, making it seem as though the modest waterfall and pond predate the surrounding concrete patio and retaining wall. Planted moss and succulents surround the tranquil water-scape, enhancing the balance of formality and natural beauty.





Winner Best Waterfall

Jason Heller

Jason Heller, a land and waterscape designer, is the owner of Neptune's Water Gardens. Jason has a degree in horticulture from the University of Nebraska and has been in the water-garden industry for more than 20 years. A Master Certified Aquascape Contractor, he often shares his extensive knowledge of the industry at nursery events and with student groups. He is a contributor to the Backyard Farmer program on NET Nebraska television.

Building a larger-than-life water feature for a high-profile client can be a tall order, especially when the client is longtime pond owner and koi aficionado. It took 75 tons of granite boulders, multiple change orders and a lot of creative fortitude to construct this towering landmark in a lakeside retirement community already known for its variety of waterscapes.

Jason Heller, the project's head contractor and owner of Neptune Water Gardens in Omaha, Nebraska, was tasked with carefully integrating this complex system of waterfalls into the existing landscape, all while satisfying

his client's high expectations and trying to stay within the original budget. He attributes his success in this project to the customer's willingness to lend him a broad creative license.

"We were able to control the design and look of the entire space, not just the water feature portion," Heller said.

An advanced filtration system, which includes two asynchronous pumps, a Mag-Drive pump and natural plants, works in harmony to create a wall of aquatic sound and a private oasis for the customer, who retires here nightly to relax, clear his mind and feed his koi.

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The **Judges**

by Jordan Morris,
Editor, POND Trade magazine

When Jason Lenox of Pond Inc. of Illinois first conceived of the Water Artisans of the Year contest on the POND Trade Facebook page back in 2016, we took to the idea instantly, jumping at the chance to provide an independent, level playing field for contractors in the pond and water-gardening industry.

Our inaugural panel was a “Dream Team” of industry leaders — a lineup that seemed impossible to beat. However, we decided to mix things up in the sophomore year of the contest, allowing last year’s judges to enter this year’s contest if they wished, and putting some of last year’s winners in

the hot seat to serve as judges.

Like last year, POND Trade staff compiled all the submissions and removed product information, contractors’ names and other identifying factors. A brief description and up to four photos of each project were presented to our seven judges, who ranked their top three choices in each category. We tallied the results and featured each category’s winner and runner-up in this issue. Employees of POND Trade magazine with knowledge of contestants’ identities did not cast votes in the process.

We’d like to thank the industry elite who hand-picked the Water Artisans of the Year of the 2017 pond season. Here’s a little more about them.

John Adams took home last year’s award for best waterfall after his pondless feature at an animal

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rescue farm wowed his customer and our judges. The owner of Modern Design Aquascaping, John has been in the industry for more than 20 years, building ponds and water features in Tennessee and 10 other states.

Brian Buchholtz's koi pond, stream and waterfalls won most naturalistic in last year's contest. He is the founder and owner of PondWorks, a water-feature construction company based in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, and brings more than 25 years of experience in design and consulting to this year's panel.

Dean Pipito's majestic golf course waterscape, which included crashing waterfalls and a 450-foot river, won best overall in last year's contest. His company, Aquatica, is one of the largest waterscape firms in the United States. Pipito brings more than 25 years of experience and a keen eye for artistic design to the panel.

James Allison joins the court from across the pond as an aquatic biologist who has been involved in the water-gardening trade for more than 30 years. He currently heads Water Garden Solutions in the United Kingdom.

Jamie Beyer is one of the Midwest's leading experts on fish and wildlife biology. His consulting and installation business, Midwest Waterscapes, designs, builds and installs water gardens, fountains and ponds. He also teaches classes on the subject and takes pride in helping do-it-yourselfers do it the right way.

Mike Gannon is a lifelong pond enthusiast and fish keeper. He started Full Service Aquatics in 1995 after working as a fish dealer and a stint at the New York Aquarium. Gannon also hosts The Pond Hunter Radio Broadcast, which can be found on iTunes.

Eric Triplett is the owner and operator of The Pond Digger Waterscape Design & Construction Company and the creator of Helix Life Support Pond Filtration Systems. He is a regular guest speaker at industry seminars and events and was inducted into the Green Industry Hall of Fame in 2015.



Runners-Up

Honorable Mentions

These runners-up still made quite a splash

by **Jordan Morris**,
Editor, POND Trade magazine

Like last year, there were no blowout victories in any of our five categories. If anything, the staff here at POND Trade had to triple-check our math when compiling the final tallies from the judges. We even raised the level of difficulty a bit this year and allowed only one category entry for each project. This required all applicants to be more careful and deliberate about how they approached the contest.

The runners-up in each category are listed on the following pages. If the level of artistry

displayed by our finalists is any indication, the 2018 pond season is going to be an even tougher playing field when it comes to showcasing the pond and water-garden industry's "best of the best." So, start saving your notes and photos of your most jaw-dropping projects, because we will start accepting entries for the 2018 contest early this fall. Do you have what it takes to be a Water Artisan of the Year?

We'd like to thank everyone who participated in this year's contest and their financial contributions to the Wounded Warrior Project. We at POND Trade are proud to support such a talented field of professionals.

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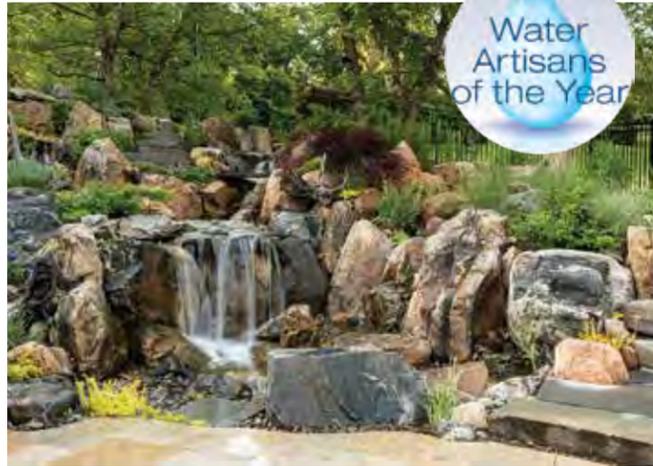


Runner-up
Best Under \$15k

Max Taylor

Magnolia Ponds & Water Gardens
www.magnoliaponds.com

Believe it or not, this yard was once a relatively flat landscape. When Taylor and his team were called to the scene, they built up the grade before they dug down to create a natural-looking slope. The soothing sounds of flowing water now reverberate throughout the property. Birds love splashing in the stream, providing hours of endless entertainment for the customer.



Runner-up
Best Large Scale



Tom Dieck

TRD Designs
www.landscape4life.com

Day or night, this iconic backyard monument captures the eye of all passers-by. A huge ecosystem pond and large-scale pondless waterfall share the spotlight, as more than 135 feet of waterfalls and streams culminate into a 5-foot presentation drop to the pool and house.



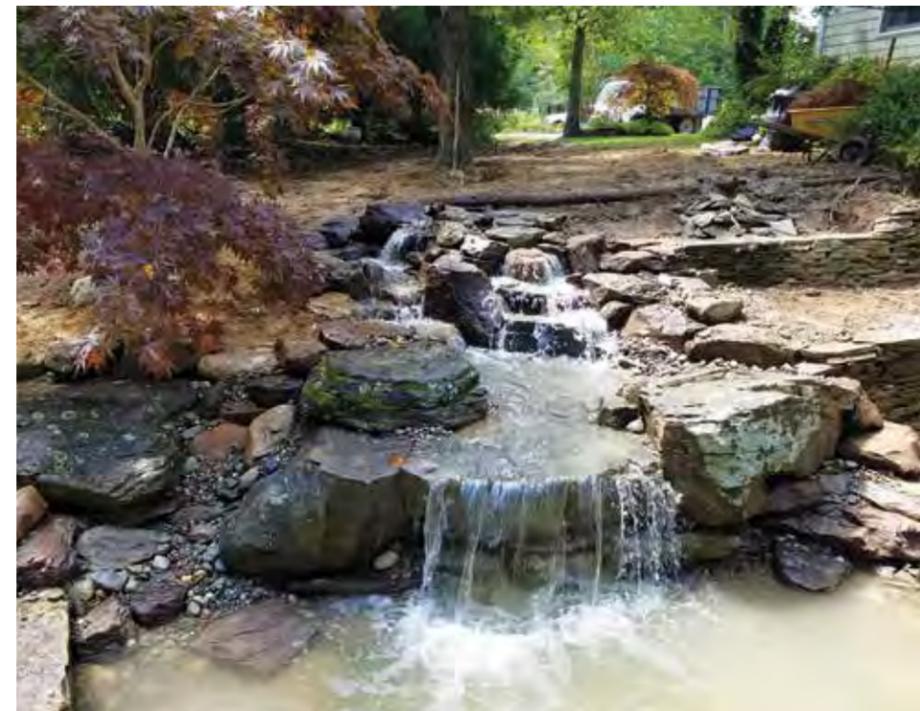
Runner-up
Best Pondless



Kelby Reed

Earthscapes Garden Room
www.earthscapesgardenroom.com

His customer envisioned a fountain on the lanai, but when Reed and his team arrived on the scene, they saw so much more. It didn't take much effort to convince the customer to expand the view of this sitting area, adding multiple water features — including a spillway centerpiece — at varying heights and volumes.



Runner-up
Best Waterfall

Ryan Bunting

Big Boulder Pond Company
www.bigboulderpondcompany.com

"Bring on the elevation!" begged Bunting, after he and his team of flatlanders worked their creative magic on this rare hill in lower Delaware's Rehobeth Beach. Laboring through the extreme heat in July, they converted an unsightly mud pit into an elegant crashing waterfall, now the only one of its kind in the nearby region.





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A granite-lined backyard pond transforms this home's outdoor ambience. From a comfortable perch on the flagstone sitting wall, one can admire koi dashing around the boulder bubbler and along the deep, slow-moving stream adorned with whimsical bronze fountains. Weathered limestone ledges mimic the naturally eroded waterfalls found throughout the nearby region.



Runner-up
Most Artistic

Jason Heller
Neptune's Water Gardens
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The Foundation of **WHY** An **artist's perspective** on how to build a pond

by **Christopher Bell**,
Bell Ponds, Plants and Patios

It's simple, right? Dig a hole and fill it with water. But beyond that, I've found that there are very few things installers can agree upon when it comes to pond construction.

Dinner of Champions

It was October 2017 when I found myself eating dinner next to Lora Lee Gelles at the beautiful Bear Creek Mountain Resort in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. The resort was hosting the 2017 Your Pond Farm Trade Show, and many of the pond industry's best and brightest were in attendance — award-winning installers and koi experts alike. Many of the industry's leading manufacturers featured awesome displays of the latest products and services.

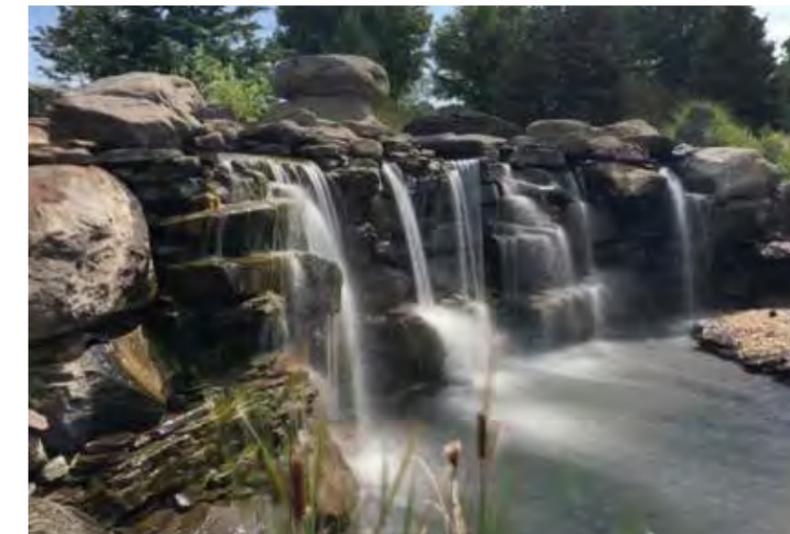
That night at dinner, we found ourselves at a huge table surrounded by quite a few of these industry leaders. If there ever was a pond-builder hall of fame, most of these people easily would be first-ballot recipients — arguably some of the best in the world.

So, when the publisher of POND Trade magazine looked over at me and asked for my thoughts on writing an article, I kind of laughed at myself and thought, "Why me?" Looking around the table at the faces of some of the best of the best, I thought, "How could I possibly explain how to construct a pond half as well as they could? I'm still learning things from them."

Specifically, I was still learning what it takes to get to

the next level and discovering ways to expand continuing education. What could I offer on this subject that would be useful to others? Perhaps my unusual way of calculating stone could prove useful, or maybe I could outline the basics of hydrostatic pressure on raised ponds, which many installers often overlook.

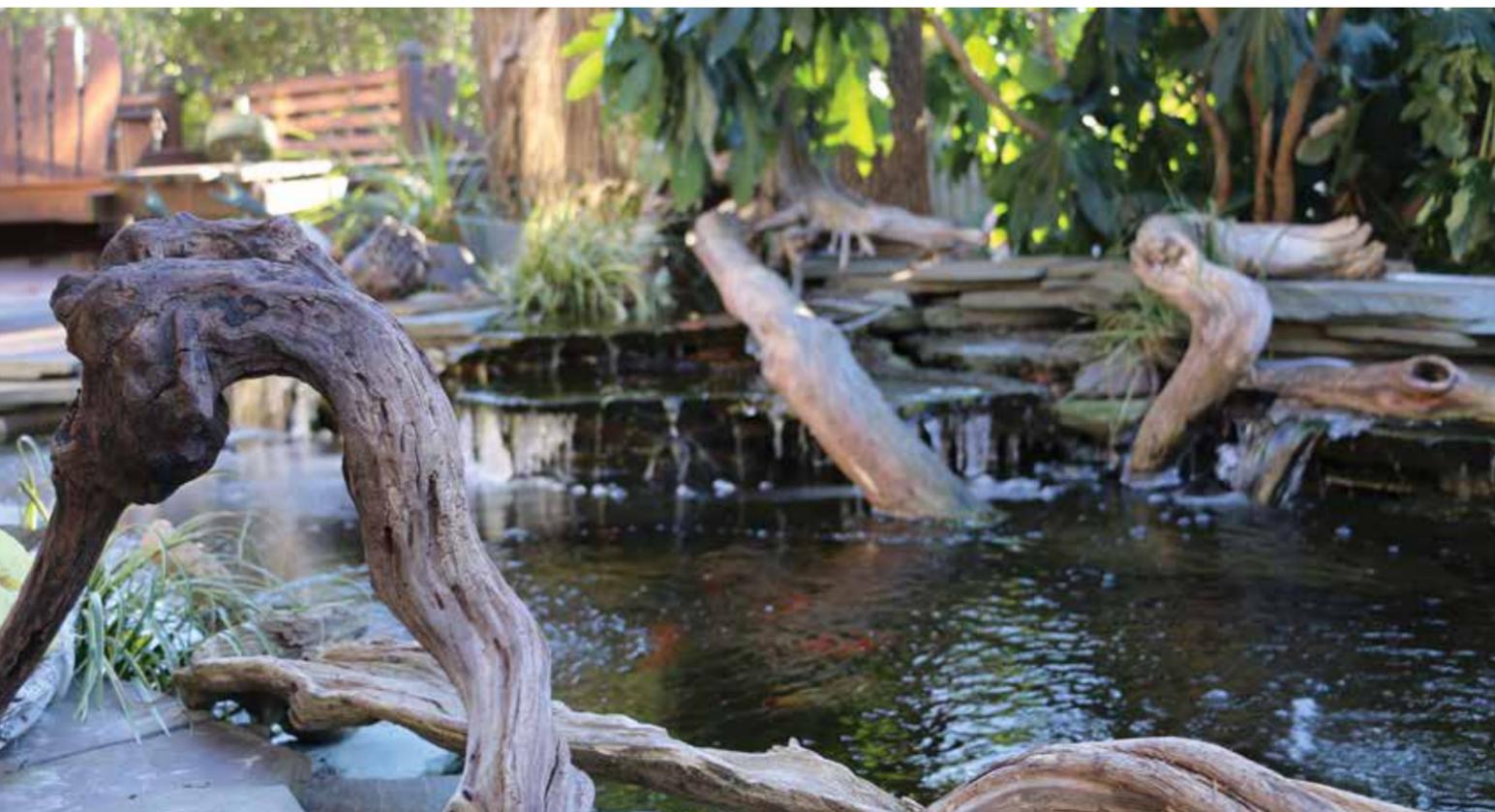
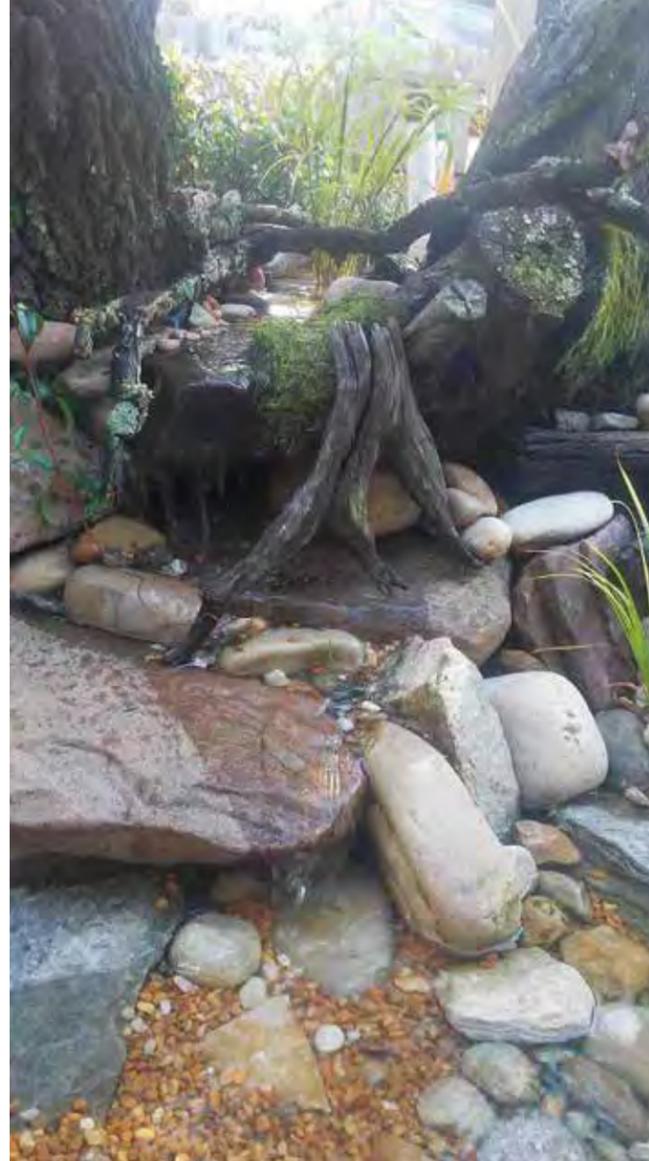
The fact was that there were already plenty of



This enchanting waterfall photo is courtesy of Frank Fink of Living Artscape Inc. It's not hard to see his work is all heart. He is one with nature, and his emotion is easily seen in his work.

books, videos and articles on the subject, and many of the methods vary. Seated around me that night were some of the actual faces and names in those videos and articles, each with slightly different approaches to their installations. The point is, not everyone has

Opposite page: Here you see two completely different designs, both with some interesting challenges. Building caves for fish to act as natural hiding spaces from predators (top left) is often among the details you don't immediately see, but they can be just as important as the details you do see — like in the strategic placement of rock (top right) for the ultimate crashing waterfalls (bottom). My client and friend, Wayne Bradby of Chesapeake, Virginia, took these photos of me at work on a successful project that we are both proud of.



the same “how-to” approach, but that does not always determine the quality of the project. There are many possible variables and methods to meet a customer’s needs, but not all apply or work equally for everyone. Although “how to” is obviously important, it is not the key to building great ponds and water features. To do that, one must not only know the physical “how” part, but more importantly, they should also understand the foundation on which great ponds are built — the mental aspect of why we build. What separates the best from the rest?

An Artistic Approach

My passion for ponds did not set in until later in life. Though I started working in the industry at an early age, all my energy went toward my love for art. That is when I learned the importance of “why I do” versus “how or what I do.” I started sketching and drawing at age seven. At age 11, I discovered painting. By age 17, I

was taking college courses and selling my work in shows up and down the East Coast. At 19, I signed with my first art dealer, a small but successful gallery out of New York City. Europe was soon to become within focus as I signed with a dealer out of southern France after a two-month backpacking trip just a few years later. During that time, I was doing four shows a month and had sold more than 100 paintings. I was living the dream.

When I started, I painted because I loved it. The art was good, and good art speaks to a person — it’s not just about the colors or the size of the canvas. I can teach anyone how to paint, but I can’t simply teach how to create art. Once I began to paint for other reasons — like money or recognition — the quality of art suffered. I could paint for days, but without the “why” aspect, I could not produce art. Once it became about what I produced, it was no longer art. The name on the brush did not matter, and soon the signature at the bottom



Here’s a close-up of a beautiful, bubbling, triple-urn water feature, complete with complementary lighting, which we completed for a customer in Yorktown, Virginia.



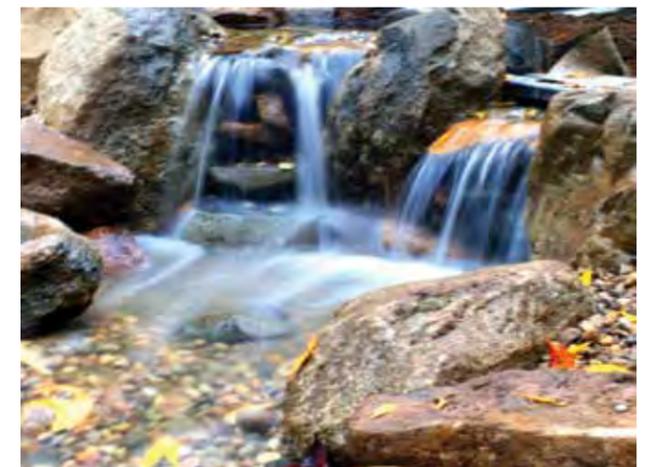
Above and right: Rex McCaskill of Pond Professors Inc., is the Jedi Master of stone placement. When it comes to personal study guides, referencing his work should be a requirement. I’m blessed that he lives close enough for us to work on builds together. Bottom left: Jerry Romano and his team at Liquid Designz take on some of the most unique challenges, but they constantly exceed expectations. When it comes to thinking outside the box, I can think of no one better. This is brilliant execution of what might be a nightmare project for most. Bottom right: Dan Put has a rare eye that allows him to see every detail of the end product before the first line is marked. Some of my overall favorite designs have come from his Michigan-based team at Puts Ponds & Gardens.



did not resemble art.

With pond-supply manufacturers offering the latest and greatest in new products and technology, and with the thousands of videos, books and articles readily available,

almost anyone can at the very least stumble their way into a functioning pond. Entire systems are sold in kits to remove much of the thinking process. Thus, I believe it’s not just about how to build a pond or even



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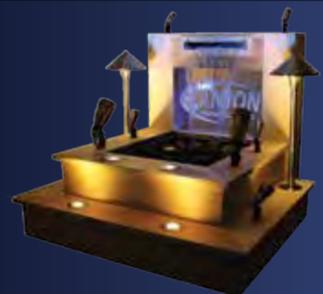
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Jason Lenox of Ponds Inc. of Illinois is always a phone call away. He not only contributed to this article, but he also designed the Bell Ponds logo. Jason is a very gifted artist, as is his brother Tony. Some of the best in the industry regularly dedicate their time to help their colleagues better themselves, and Jason is tops on that list.

what products we use. Let's face it — there are many companies that make great pond and water-feature products.

Moreover, some methods will vary simply due to the need to meet specific requirements and restrictions dictated by the customer or a particular region. For example, in my area, we are surrounded by beaches, wetlands, lakes and rivers. This provides a natural habitat for predatory animals that are naturally designed for hunting fish. On many installs, it is necessary to build caves below the water surface to provide safe areas for the koi. This means we must rock our ponds. In contrast, many other areas of the country do not have the same requirement — instead, they have other challenging issues to overcome.

The Common Denominator

In the days and weeks following the trade show, I struggled with how to write this article. I personally get tips, insight and inspiration from many people who were at the table that night. How might one of them approach it? I even considered calling a few of these guys and asking for their thoughts. Or, perhaps I could interview them, asking a series of the same old debatable questions?

Then it hit me! I realized what all those pond powerhouses had in common that made them widely recognized for being so good. The best may use a multitude of various styles, methods and an array of products, but they all have one thing in

common: a true love and passion for the work they do. It's not just a job; it's an art. It says something about them. A great pond is not determined by how much money was made, or how large the feature is. It starts with an understanding of why it's being built in the first place. When you believe in what you do, it adds value to life. When it becomes less about stone and size and more about something personal, you leave a part of yourself in the build, and it becomes art.

The customer never sees everything underneath the final product — the pumps, the liner and everything else. In the end, it's the art and beauty of the install. Our customers and our competitors only see the end result. We all want to see that "wow" from our clients and colleagues alike, and the best achieve the "wow" by starting with a foundation of "why."

Personally, I have much to learn and improve on when it comes to pond construction. I am, however, in love with my work, and that passion drives me to deliver my best on every install. Although I have more than 27 years of experience in the field, I am not afraid to make mistakes or ask for advice. I try to remind myself of the famous quote by Michelangelo he made in his 80s: "I am only just learning the ABCs of my profession." The best in our industry approach life and work with that same humility. They share their years of wisdom with each other. There is a genuine, shared passion for what they do. If you want to

learn how to build ponds, you must first ask yourself why you are building one in the first place. In the end, the true lasting value will not be found in the money spent, what kind of pump was used or how many koi are in the pond. The long-term return comes from positive lifestyle changes and the joy found in the work we do. It all starts with the foundation of why. ☞

About the Author

Christopher Bell is an award-winning water feature and natural stone wall artisan. He is the owner and operator of Bell Ponds, Plants and Patios, with more than 27 years in the field. He loves that



after so many years, there is still so much to learn. Through the love of his children ("The Bell Tribe") and fiancée, and with support from Yorktown Garden Market and Eastridge Lawns and Landscapes, his company is unique in its ability to provide complete home transformations. He believes that with unity comes strength, and through that belief, he consistently seeks the wisdom of the best in the field. His passion fuels him as an artisan in the field to not only showcase his talents, but also to leave a positive mark on this world.



Catch the Rainbow

Nishikigoi bring a splash of color to the pond

by **Ellen Kloubec,**
Kloubec Koi Farms

The pond build is complete! Water parameters are in check, and oxygen levels are adequate. Congratulations — you’ve created the ideal pond environment for your customer. The next step is to introduce koi into the pond because, after all, koi are the highlight of the water garden experience. They really are living jewels.

Just like gemstones, koi come in many colors. Some pond owners want only one color of fish in their pond. They love the aesthetically perfect image that monochromatic, single-colored fish provide. A pond that has just one variety of koi, such as Platinum Ogon (solid-white, metallic koi) is very striking. Other pond owners prefer a full color palette, desiring every color of the rainbow in their backyard water feature.

Deciding which koi colors look best in a body of water is solely up to the owner. Each pond is unique, and every koi is unique as well. No selection is right, and no selection is wrong. The most important factor to consider is to obtain beautiful and healthy koi for your customer’s pond.

Color Combinations

When we look at a rainbow in the sky, we see a blend of colors: red, yellow, green and blue. Some koi variety names incorporate the Japanese word for a particular color, plus goi, which means carp. One example is the solid, nonmetallic red koi called Benigoi. *Beni* is the word for the color red. Nonmetallic yellow koi are Kigoi — *ki* means yellow. And green koi, which are quite rare, are Midorigoi. *Midori* — you guessed it — is the term for the color green.

There are significantly more varieties, types and colors of koi than those mentioned here. You can read

about many more on the Kloubec Koi Farm website: www.kloubekoi.com/ellens-koi-education/.

Yamabuki Ogon: A “Pot-o-Gold”

Yamabuki Ogon means “yellow-gold” in Japanese. This variety is favored by many koi hobbyists for its brilliant golden-metallic skin with luster. This gentle variety can grow quite large and usually has a well-rounded, voluminous shape, producing an imposing presence in the pond. It should be blemish-free and have a consistent yellow color from nose to tail. A solid-colored metallic koi, the Yamabuki Ogon is easily visible even in pond water with less-than-desirable clarity. Often times, Yamabuki can be easily trained to eat from the hand of its owner, just like the nonmetallic yellow Kigoi.

From Drab to Fab

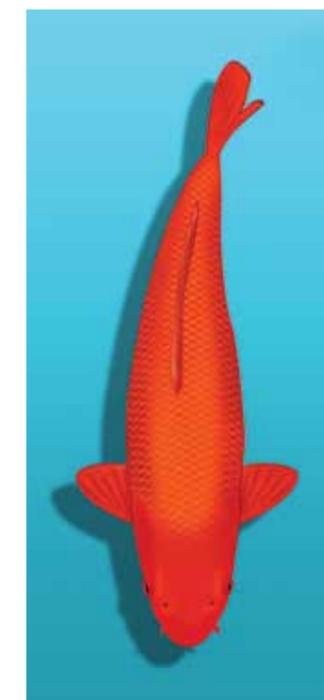
Approximately 1,000 years ago, the ordinary,

common black carp was raised by farmers as a food source in Europe, Japan, China and Korea. The fish were plain in color and known as Magoi. These brown or black, drab-colored carp were depicted in many works of art and pottery in ancient times. The transformation of Magoi into our cherished living jewels began in the 1800s. Natural mutations occurred in the offspring, and a few fish emerged displaying additional pigment — mainly spots of red color. The rice farmers separated those rare specimens with irregularities and began producing colored carp.

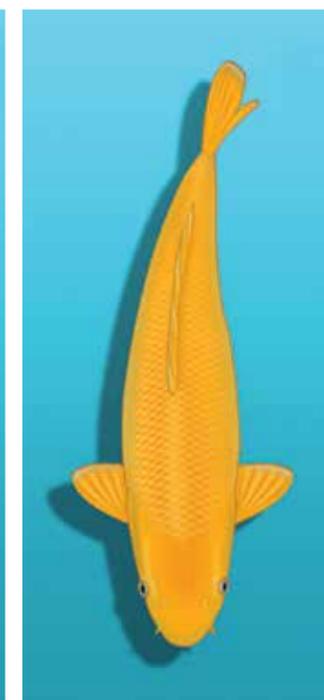
The bland, common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, has undergone countless transformations over many years of selective breeding to become the fabulously colored koi of today. Our finned friends that are kept for personal enjoyment and hobby were painstakingly bred and nurtured hundreds

Glossary of Koi Colors

Ai	(eye)	Indigo Blue
Aka	(ah kah)	Red
Beni	(ben knee)	Strong Red
Cha	(chah)	Brown
Gin	(geen)	Silver
Hi	(he)	Red markings
Ki	(key)	Yellow
Kin	(keen)	Gold
Midori	(mid or ee)	Green
Shiro	(she row)	White
Sumi	(sue me)	Black



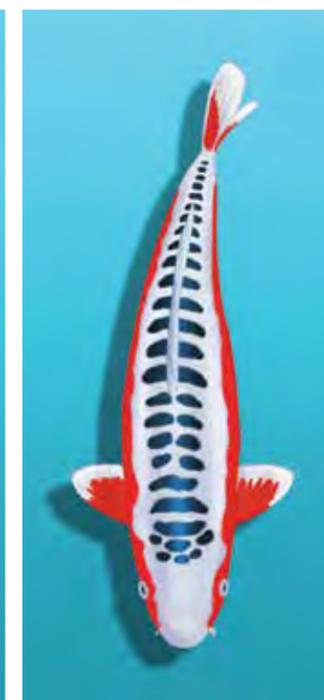
RED
Benigoi (ben-e-goy), orange-red



YELLOW
Kigoi (key-goy), solid yellow



GREEN
Midorigoi (mid-or-e-goy), solid green (most commonly found with Doitsu scales)



BLUE
Shusui (shoe-swe), blue with red below the lateral lines (always Doitsu-scaled)



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Yamabuki Ogon (left) are judged in the Hikari Muji class due to their shining metallic skin. Yellow fish add a splash of sunshine to the pond. Hand-feeding your koi (right) is a great way to introduce newcomers to the joy of a backyard pond. This is our ever-popular "Yellow Sub," a Kigo.

of years ago. Those dedicated Japanese farmers became the first koi breeders.

In the early 1900s, the innovative breeders in Japan crossed a German carp with their highly-prized colored carp. Those breeding efforts resulted in early versions of the Doitsu (scaleless) types we are familiar with these days. Other breeding methods and the introduction of different fish have produced multiple-colored koi and variations such as metallic skin (Ogon), ginrin scales (sparkly diamond) and the

long, graceful, exaggerated fins of the Hirenaga (butterfly koi).

We are thankful for the tireless and devoted efforts of the early Asian koi breeders of yesteryear. Without their foresight, the common black carp might not have evolved into the beautiful, colorful gems of today. Additionally, we owe the success of the koi industry to these insightful breeders. If not for their intrigue and commitment, keeping a piece of the rainbow in our backyards might have never been possible. ☪

About the Author

Ellen Kloubec and her husband Myron began their aquaculture business in 1981, and their farm consists of 80 acres of mud ponds. Together with their son Nick, they raise and supply healthy and hardy koi to wholesale customers throughout the USA and Canada. Ellen loves all things koi. www.klubeckoi.com



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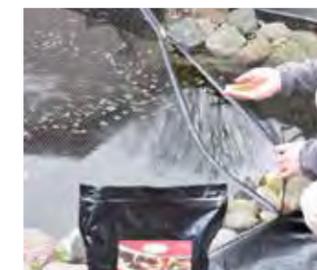
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Over and Out

Selling your company requires a strong exit strategy

by **Steve Shinholser,**

Premier Ponds

Many of us who own a business have dreamed of selling it one day and living the dream of retirement. Most of us have very little idea how to make this dream come true. Usually this only happens with a well thought-out plan. Yes, you need a real plan that will work in the real world. Read on to learn how this process works — and yes, it does work.

Is your company sellable?

I was speaking with a 25-year-old business owner recently, and I asked him what his ultimate goal in business was. He replied, “I want to sell my company one day.” I asked, “For how much would you sell it to me right now?” He replied, “\$200,000 to \$300,000.”

So, I continued. “Let’s say I give you \$300,000 for your company, and you plan to introduce your company to me, the new owner, tomorrow morning. On the way to this introduction, you get hit by a bus. So now, I’m all by myself in front of my new company. Am I going to have a joyous day, or is it going to be the most hellish day of my life?”

“You are going to have the worst day of your life!” he answered.

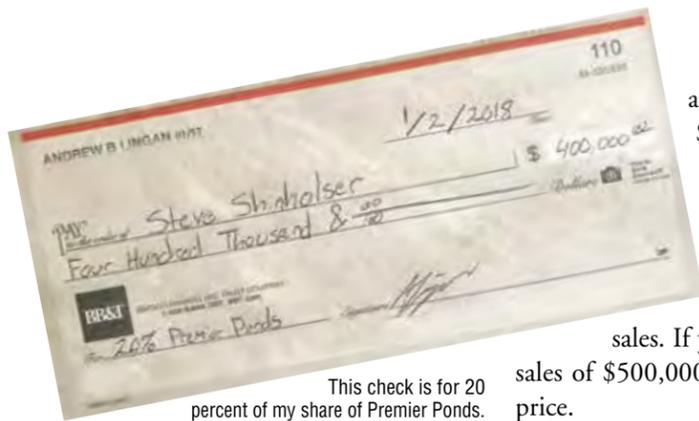
My reply was simple. “You don’t have a company to sell, then. You have a job — and a lousy one at that. You told me a few minutes ago that you could not even commit to a lunch, because you are flying around like Superman all day, saving your employees and your company from drowning.” Does this sound familiar to you?

Look at your company like an investment

Suppose I have \$300,000 to invest. I could invest it in many ways, but let’s just focus on two options: either I buy your company, or I buy stock in Apple Inc.

If I buy your company, my life will likely turn into a living hell if you are not there with me to help put out all the fires. If I want to quit and get out, how will I ever get my money back? I probably never will, unless I find a bigger fool than I to purchase the company. My investment in your company will most likely be my biggest nightmare.

If I buy Apple stock, I don’t have any work or time constraints whatsoever. I can get out of this investment any time and get my money back with a few clicks of a mouse. This investment may be up or down (and lately it’s been way up),



This check is for 20 percent of my share of Premier Ponds.

an average net profit of \$100,000 over each of the last three years. So, your business is worth about \$300,000.

Second, calculate your annual gross sales. If your company has gross sales of \$500,000, then that's your sales price.

A couple of notes on this: there is a direct relationship between net profit and gross annual sales when calculating your company value. The higher your net profit, the more your company is worth. For instance, if you have \$1 million in gross annual sales but only \$100,000 in net profit, your company is worth closer to \$300,000 than \$1 million. Also, both methods are only a starting point for discussing the value of your company. For instance, the more your company can operate without you, the more it will be worth to a future buyer.

but it requires little effort on my part, and my investment is extremely liquid.

The bottom line is, when you go to sell your company, you must ask yourself, "Would I want to buy this company without me here to run it?"

Properly Valuing Your Company

Of course, there are many ways to evaluate your company, but let's focus on two of them.

First, calculate three times your average net earnings over the previous three years of business. For example, let's say you have

So, the more your company is set up like a franchise (like McDonald's) and can operate with anyone at the helm, the more appealing your company will be to sell.

How do I find a buyer?

I have bought and sold several companies, and it's not an easy process. It takes time and planning to do it right. In fact, this is so daunting of a process that most small-business owners just shut down their companies and walk away.

According to Alpine Business Brokers, "Reliable sources report that approximately 20 percent of small businesses are for sale at any one time. Only about 20 to 25 percent of these will actually sell."

In translation, the clear majority of all businesses do not sell.

However, there are three viable strategies for most business owners to consider when they're in a position to sell.

1. Hire a business broker to sell your company for you.

This is a relatively easy option, but sellers beware. Business brokers are in it for the commission of the sale. I have hired a few in my past, and I have found that they usually have their own best interest at heart — not yours. I once owned a high-end hair salon that a broker sold for \$15,000 — the amount of inventory on the shelves. My partner and I had invested \$250,000. All of it was lost because the business needed a capable full-time owner, and the broker simply took the first deal that was offered. My partner and I were so frustrated with the business that we were OK with walking away and taking our losses.

2. Find an existing business to buy you out.

This strategy requires homework, luck and timing. You will need to find a similar or complementary business that can monetize your company. Usually they will require you, the owner, to stay on for a year or two to help with the transition. They will often protect their investment by tying the future performance of your company into the purchase price. Basically, they want to make certain that the company they are buying is exactly what you have represented to them. In other words, if you sell someone a car with a hidden mechanical problem, they will find out, and you'll have to make it right. You need to be open and honest, or someone will get hurt in this scenario.

3. Produce your own buyer from inside your company.

This is the strategy I am currently using to sell Premier Ponds. It has been 10 years in the making. You must make certain that the next generation of owners has the right stuff to run the company and buy you out. There are a couple of ways to sell your company to current employees.

First, they can hand you the money, and you're done. This is extremely rare. After all, if they had access to that kind of money, chances are they could simply start their own business. They will need to know that they are better off buying your business than starting their own. Numbers don't lie; people do.

Second, you can present them with an "earn-out." Basically, you lend them the money plus interest to buy you out. The trick here is to properly value the sale of your company so they can pay you back as agreed. Again, you must work out the numbers with them. All of you must know that given a reasonable assumption of future earnings, they can both pay you back and feed their families at the same time. The last thing you want is for the deal to go bad. You must calculate a fair price that is achievable for everyone involved.

You must be willing to sell or buy your company at the same price. It is crucial that you create a win-win scenario. You will need an accurate accounting of your past business to show the new owner that the

Steve's Timeline for Selling Premier Ponds

- September 2001:** I started Premier Ponds. My goal was twofold: to make \$1,000 per day and to build a company that would be sellable in the future.
- 2007:** I hired Mike and Andrew and told them about my plans for my company. "Either I sell to my kids or find someone like you to buy it," I said.
- September 2011:** I mapped out an exact exit strategy with my accountant, which included valuation, how to structure the buyout and how to execute the plan.
- 2014:** All four of my kids declined to purchase any part of my company (after multiple attempts), so I started serious talks with Mike and Andrew about the exact details of my exit strategy.
- January 2016:** I sold 30 percent to Andrew and 30 percent to Mike.
- January 2018:** I sold an additional 20 percent to Andrew.
- Currently:** I have a three-year contract to help run Premier Ponds until January 2021. At that point, I will sell my last 20 percent to Mike or Andrew.
- January 2021:** Start living the dream by waking up every day and having the freedom to do what I want to do — not what I have to do!

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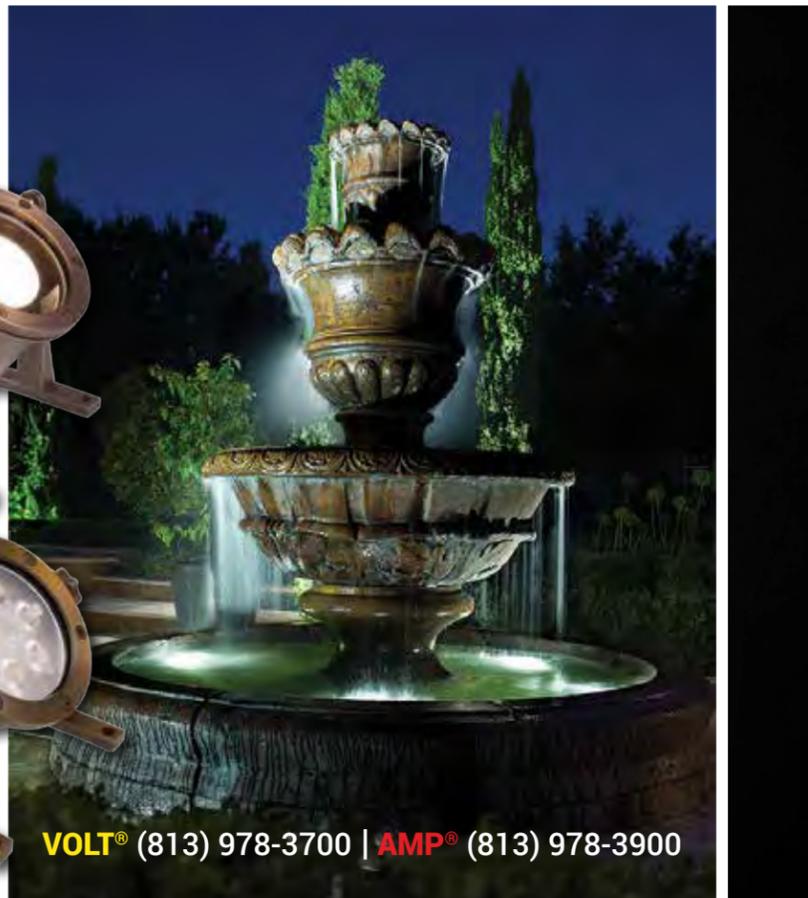
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deal is doable. You do not want to sell your company on a wing and a prayer.

How many years should it take to pay the owner back?

In other words, how many years would you want to work to pay back the owner of a business you purchased? Usually the answer is between three and seven years. I think that when you try to set a price to sell your company, you need to put yourself in the buyer's shoes. Would you take the same deal that you are offering?

It takes time and an accurate set of numbers to properly structure a buyout. I recently read a memo from my accountant dated September 2011 outlining the exact buyout deal that I'm currently executing. A written, executable and realistic plan is paramount. Start that today.

What happens if it goes downhill?

A lawyer will be necessary to draw up

the proper paperwork, legally execute a binding contract and spell out any repercussions if things go south following the sale.

Here are a few what-if questions that you will need to know the answers to in advance.

What if the new owner becomes incapacitated or passes away?

What if the new owner needs to leave the business for honorable or inevitable reasons?

What if the new owner leaves the business for less-than-honorable reasons?

What if they don't or can't pay you back as scheduled?

What if you want back into the business?

How do you resolve conflicts?

A good lawyer will have the answers to these questions and more. It's an absolute must to do it the right way. This is no time to go cheap. You are talking about the lives of others, as well as your own retirement. ☞

About the Author

Steve Shinholser has been in the aquatics industry for more than 35 years, but he grew up in



the water. After graduating from the University of Maryland, where he was on a diving scholarship, he started a pool manage-

ment company. After selling the pool management company 15 years later, he searched for his new passion. He tried his hand at ponds and finished his first project on September 12, 2001. Sitting outside with the homeowner next to the pond was such a moving experience that he realized this would be his new passion.

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Three-fall flower form of
Iris laevigata 'Violet Constellation'



An Eye for an *Iris*

A profile
of the 'true aquatic iris'

by **Chad Harris,**
Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm

Whether natural or man-made, there are many different water-garden irises that can grow in and around your pond. *Iris laevigata* is related to many of the water-loving irises found in the *laevigatae* series. This series includes irises found across the world: the United States' two natives (*Iris virginica* and *Iris versicolor*), Europe's yellow-flag *Iris pseudacorus*, Asia's *Iris maackii* and *Iris ensata*, better known as the Japanese iris. *Iris laevigata*, well known in Japan as *kakit-subata* and in China as *yan-zi-hua*, is found native in northern Japan and across eastern Asia to Siberia's Lake Baikal, where it was initially found around 1770 by botanist P.S. Pallas. It must be noted, though, that written poems naming this iris in Japan date back to 760 A.D. Due to its native temperature ranges, this iris can be grown throughout USDA zones 3 to 9 with little care.

How to Plant Them

Many of the water-loving irises are marginal plants and need special siting, with their roots reaching water and crowns growing above the water line. If the crown is below the water line with a heavy winter freeze, major loss may be experienced due to suffocation. *Iris laevigata*, however, is more versatile and able to grow at the edge of a natural pond both above the water line and slightly deeper, to the point of being totally submerged. This

trait lends itself to being an excellent candidate for a container-grown plant slightly submerged in a man-made pond. The smaller stature of *Iris laevigata* also lends itself to be grown in a container; however, a minimum



Six-fall flower form
of 'Lakeside Ghost'

of 3 to 5 gallons should be used. This will reduce need for transplanting to every three or four years; plus, this adds stability to the container, keeping it from tipping over. In a natural pond, transplanting may not be necessary while the plant finds its own space during naturalization. I have grown *Iris laevigata* 'Semperflorens' at our natural pond for more than 20 years with no extra care aside from weeding grasses and ferns from the crown.

Many have said that the bloom season of irises is too short. However, the nature of *Iris laevigata* — sending up several blooms per bud, blooming one at a time and lasting three days each — will usually find the plant blooming for three to four weeks. I am also finding with my



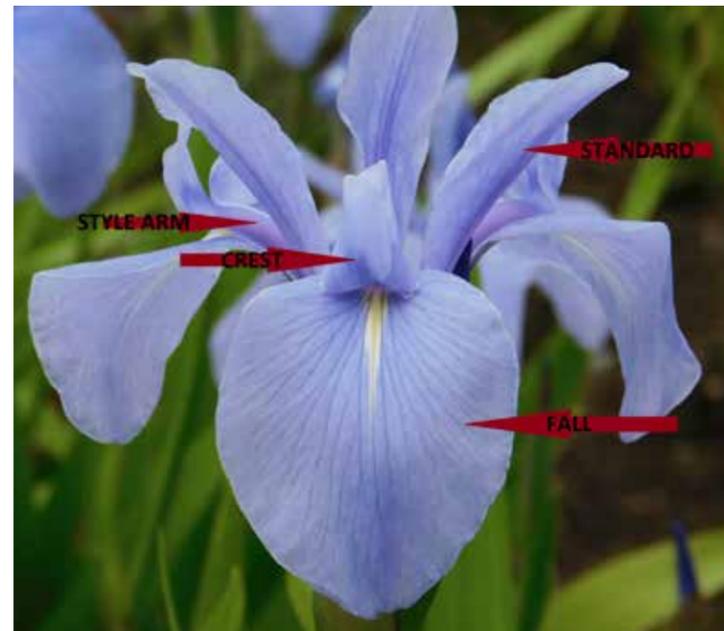
breeding program that different strains bloom earlier and later, so you can help extend the season by growing two or more varieties. An even larger extension of the bloom season can be made by adding its cousins, *Iris ensata* and a new hybrid 'Pseudata,' to your mix of plantings, as they bloom a full month later.

Parts of the Iris

The basic flower form of *Iris laevigata* is the same for others in the iris family, with multiples of three standards, falls and style arms with crests. The easy way to remember the parts of an iris flower are to think, "standing standards," "falling falls" and "your coat of style arms with the family crests at your heart."

Flower parts can be changed up with some irises, most notably with *Iris laevigata* and *Iris ensata*, by converting the standards into a second layering of falls, thus making a double flower with no standards and six falls. The bloom of *Iris laevigata*

Top left: "Irises at Yatsushashi (Eight Bridges)" by Ogata Korin. Top right: Handsome foliage protrudes from this mature plant. Left: A variety of containers grow *Iris laevigata* — notice the double-potting. Bottom left: 'Semperflorens' naturalize on the shore of our pond. Bottom right: The parts of an iris flower are straightforward and easy to recognize.



gata can be 4 to 6 inches across, making for a magnificent display close and far. Colors are limited to alba-white, red-violet and blue-violet, and they can be found in all shades, from deep-royals to pastels. The many different dotted patterns mixed with the various shades make for an almost unlimited array of colors and patterns.

While the plant is remarkable in bloom, we also need to direct our attention to the plant as a whole. In my garden talks, I have a saying: "The bloom to the plant is like icing on a cake." The plant is the foundation. It needs to have strength and look good throughout the growing season. The bloom is a bonus. The unique, soft, lime-green foliage of *Iris laevigata* is very handsome. The natural arching fountain forms at 1 to 2 feet tall, and individual blades of the foliage form at 2 to 3 inches across, making this plant a real standout for the water garden.

Tips & Tricks

Site this plant in full sun to partial shade.

In a natural pond, plant at the water's edge and let it find its own depth. In the man-made pond, an elevated container may be used. At first, it is advisable to start the newly acquired plants with the rhizome above the water line to prevent rotting. After new growth and roots start to anchor, the container may be lowered and covered by 1 to 2 inches of water. If you wish to have the handsome foliage and bloom next to the pond and not directly in the water, it is recommended to double-pot it — planting it in a poly-container and dropping it into a larger decorative container. The decorative container thus serves two purposes: to act as a sun shield for the roots in the poly-container, and to give a decorative look for enjoyment.

Winter care for these very hardy plants is simple. If grown in a natural pond, let it be. In a submerged container, let it be. If the container is out of the water in mild areas, they can be left out all winter. In colder areas, the poly-container should be buried in the garden to mulch the plant. The decorative container should be brought in to a protective dry area for winter storage.

Iris laevigata for many centuries has been grown and admired throughout northern Asia. With simple beauty, ease of growth and hardiness, does it not demand a space in your garden as well? ☞

About the Author

Chad Harris of Mt. Pleasant

Iris Farm has been growing many different species of irises in southwest Washington for more than 40 years. He is respected in the iris world as a master judge with the American Iris Society. His work with *Iris ensata* include several national awards for his introductions. He also enjoys working with the Asian water species *Iris laevigata*.



He regularly writes articles and gives presentations on Japanese iris judging and culture.

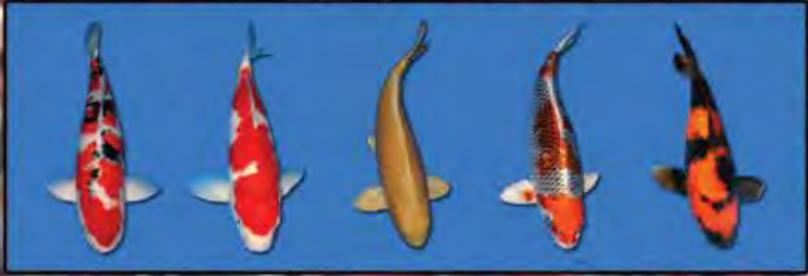
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We installed a radial separator tank with bottom drain and piping.

The Endangered Sanctuary

A fish-safe airlift system for species protection

by **Kent Wallace**,
Living Water Solutions

In August 2016, I was contacted by Von Winkel from the Las Vegas Springs Preserve. The Springs Preserve is associated with the Las Vegas Valley Water District and does a lot of work to preserve the original habitat in the ancient springs that rose from the desert floor of the valley where Native Americans and eventually early pioneers settled. Early on, it was a water stop for the railroad, and the settlement grew around the pumping station and well that were

established there. Listed on the National Register of Historic places since 1978 and engaged in wildlife conservation, they were charged with creating a more permanent habitat for an endangered species, the Pahrump poolfish (*Empetrichthys Latos*).

The Pahrump poolfish lost its natural habitat around 1975, and the rescued population has been kept in several locations around Nevada, including a hatchery. In 2015, it was time for them to build a dedicated habitat, so they entered into a safe-harbor agreement with the Department of the Interior. They wanted to create an outdoor recirculating system where the fish could thrive, protected from invasive species and predators. The space they had to work with was a long section of the original creek area surrounded by cottonwood

trees. This section of the wash had been originally controlled and dammed up with some concrete and liner, but it received overflow from the upstream areas, which made it unprotected. The space was inadequate to house an endangered species.

Debbie Gifford of Green Valley Pools agreed to tackle the project, but she needed guidance, as she had never built a living feature before. I've been to meetings with members of the Springs Preserve numerous times over the last 10 years to advise them on issues in other parts of the wash. This would be the first time I would be involved in a project other than in a solely advisory role.

A Daunting Endeavor

There were a lot of challenges, especially the completion deadline of November 2016. That was over a year ago at the time of this writing, but it's now finally coming together. Other challenges were the massive number of cottonwood leaves dropping into the water and sides that sloped down into the creek area. They wanted as close to a natural look as possible while keeping it isolated and protected in some manner. The maintenance regime had to be reasonable, and they also wanted to use the space for events, like weddings. The fish were small, at about



Pictured in the above sequence of photos are the air manifolds (top), an air pump station (second), the radial separator in action (third) and the initial shell for the upper pool (bottom) with side troughs for plants.

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3 inches as adults — and we all know how hard recirculating systems and their respective equipment can be on small fish. They appear to be hardy but can't withstand low dissolved oxygen content for long durations.

System Specifications

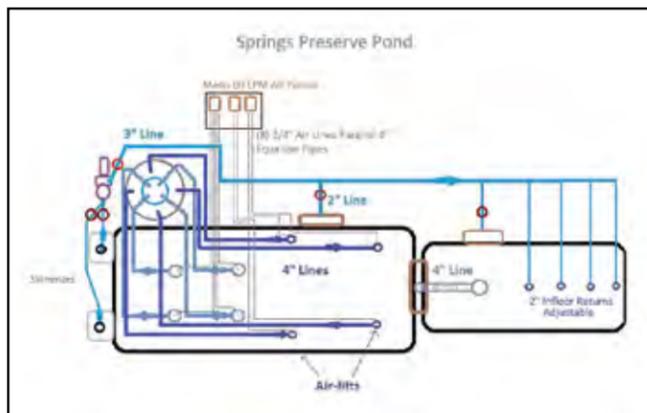
The feature was to consist of two ponds — upper and lower — and I had estimated the total volume at approximately 15,000 gallons at about 2 feet deep. We couldn't go deeper because of the large, 4-inch overflow lines buried beneath the creek area. Above all, it had to be fish-safe, considering we needed a turnover rate of close to twice an hour to make it survivable in our desert environment.

I decided to use two of my large Helix skimmers with the 8-inch circular weirs and 24-inch baskets on the outlet end of the lower pond. The weirs on these skimmers floated very close to the surface and made it very difficult for a small fish to get over

the edge, even at 4,000 to 5,000 gph. The skimmers were powered by a 10,000-gph Wlim Dragon pump, which flowed to two waterfalls, one for each pool. The 24-inch baskets would contain a large volume of leaves between cleanings. The 3-inch pipe

system that flowed with little or no adjustment. Water from the upper pond flowed toward the lower pond and exited through one of my trough drains, creating an active bottom drain tied into the overflow trough with no pump involved. With the drain outlet in the bottom of the trough, the 1-inch difference between the trough's upper and lower spill edges caused the bottom drain to flow approximately 3,500 to 4,000 gph, with the balance of the flow traveling over the top edge and into the trough. I've used this system many times on multilevel ponds, and it always works well. It also has the advantage of holding the water level in the upper pond when the system is shut off. The level can only go down to the level of the lower spill edge before it stops.

The lower pond had four 4-inch aerated bottom drains with flush-mount 5-inch air diffusers. The bottom drains were installed on the end closest to the skimmers, creating a stream-flow design for the overall system.



This is the plumbing layout for the single settlement tank (radial separator) in the upper and lower ponds. from the pump split off into the two falls and then into four in-floor adjustable returns in the upper pond, making water flow balance much easier to achieve.

I wanted to build a very passively adjusted



Right: A broad view captures the tranquility of the upper pond. Left: The mechanical pump housing was installed near the far end of the lower pond.

The drains each connected individually to a 500-gallon tank that was 4 feet in diameter, constructed as a radial separator. The water flowed upward into a center cylinder constructed from a 55-gallon drum open on both ends. The incoming water traveled upward and then reversed its flow downward, because the top of the center drum was slightly above water level. The water traveled downward at a much slower rate than it did through the 4-inch piping due to the increase

in the containment diameter. When the water reached the bottom of the center drum, it reversed direction again and started flowing upward, forcing the heavier solids to fall to the bottom. The cleaner water, at an even slower rate, traveled upward toward the outlets. The water was removed from the surface of the tank through four of my 8-inch circular weirs and into the pond through four 4-inch airlifts mounted in the pond floor between the overflow trough and the drains. The circular weirs

allowed the radial-separator design to be used on a pond with a fluctuating water level.

Maintenance Notes

The radial separator concept is a very efficient, yet passive way to separate heavy solids and detritus from the incoming water column. It's also very fish-safe in that the circular weir, as mentioned earlier, is the most difficult type of weir for a small fish to enter.



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Some fish may end up in the tank, but they can be removed with nets and placed back in the upper pool. Any small fish that do get over the edge of the weirs will be injected safely back into the pond through the airlifts. This makes both ponds relatively fish-safe for a high-turnover system. The airlifts are safe and will keep the dissolved oxygen content consistently high. The bioconversion will be done naturally with troughs full of aquatic plants lining both sides of each pool.

If the ammonia levels can't be kept under control with the side troughs due to fish load over time, more plants can be added to the upper pool, or a biofilter can be added to the end of the return line in the upper pool.

The airlifts are powered by two 80-lpm Medo air pumps at approximately 1 amp each, making the largest part of the turnover and oxygenation extremely efficient, at close to 20,000 gph of flow. The small, 5-inch diffusers in the drain dome centers are operated by a third 80-lpm Medo pump on a mechanical timer. Because the area is to be used as a venue, the main airlift pumps are on

a reverse manual timer. This timer is normally on, so when the dial gets turned, the system shuts off for any set period (up to one hour). This allows the venue organizer to shut off the system without having to remember to turn it back on after an event (such as a wedding ceremony) is finished. I like this timer, and as it's not listed on the Intermatic website, the part number is FF360M.

An A+ for Airlift

I'm hoping that this air-operated, fish-safe system can be used as a model for others in the future. The surrounding landscape and aesthetic finish work isn't complete yet, but you all know what the pretty stuff looks like. Photos of the finished project will be made available later this year when the habitat is completed.

In your own community, you may find opportunities to renew or establish habitats, so keep airlift systems in mind. I was honored to contribute to this ongoing effort to support an endangered species. 

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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Achoo!

When a pond is ailing,
how do we diagnose the cause?

by **Rick Smith,**
EasyPro Pond Products

We receive thousands of phone calls each year, and a significant number of them are from pond owners and pond-service companies who are struggling to keep a pond clear and beautiful. This is so sad, because they are being robbed of the joys of living the pond life, especially considering that keeping a pond in proper ecological balance is really a very simple process.

I know it is hard to believe, but there are parts of the country where it has been common practice to ignore the need for filtration. Or, if they do use filtration, there is a lack of understanding of the importance of properly-sized

filtration. Then there are those who aren't aware that there is an underlying design problem, and after using every recommended treatment out there, they still battle to keep their pond clear. This is not good for the pond owner or the future of the water-feature industry.

Keep It Simple ...

I know there are very good, detailed diagnostic lists of varying sizes out there. But I would suggest that simply utilizing the K.I.S.S. principle first will provide significant benefits in most cases.

1. Quickly review the current pond design. Are all best practices in place?

2. Provide an easy-to-understand (and easy-to-remember) diagnosis and action steps for



Left: Ecologically balanced "gin-clear water" means healthier fish. Right: Proper filtration, beneficial bacteria and plants provide season-long, low-maintenance enjoyment.

An ailing pond or a pond after a hard winter can be ecologically cleaned and balanced very quickly with just a few basic steps.



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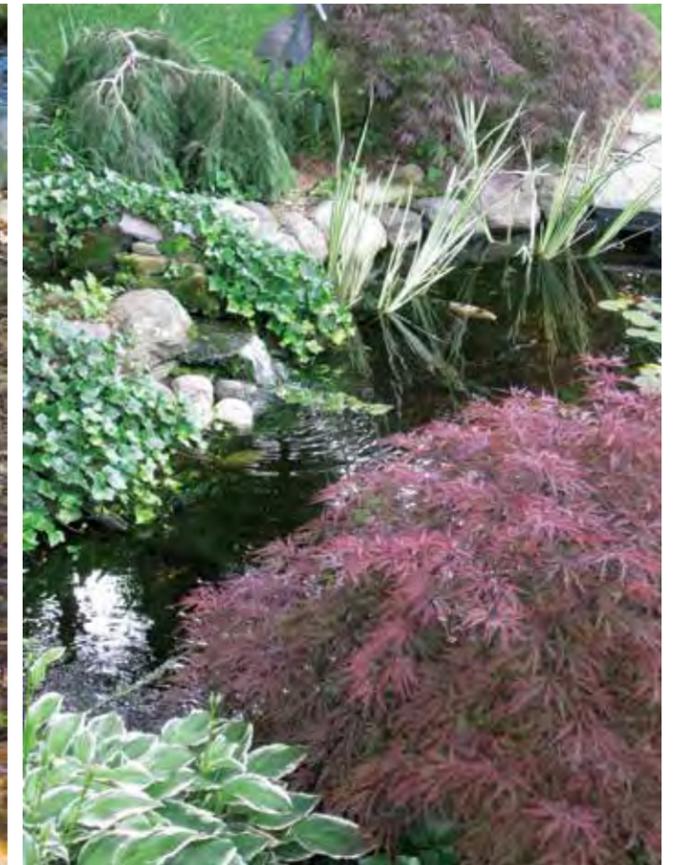
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Left: Neglected filter pads are one of the most frequent causes of poor water quality. Frequently clean filter pads in the early spring, and they will require less attention the rest of the season. Right: Regular maintenance of filter pads provides season-long benefits.

the customer.

3. Call back and measure the results. By applying the K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle, we have found that a quick and basic Diagnostic Punch List can quickly diagnose the issues contributing to the ongoing problem — which usually include cloudy water or algae. At the same time, this list provides the customer with corrective steps that are easy to understand and follow, along with immediate and long-term solutions.

In most cases, there are between one and four contributing factors. First, the pond owner may not be knowledgeable of the basic principles of ecological pond balance and the simple steps of pond maintenance. Second, the pond may not have been properly installed in the first place because the installer did not apply best practices. Third, the demands on the pond's filtration system may have outgrown the original design. Finally, there could be a lack of understanding about what natural influences Mother

Nature has on a body of water, especially in early spring.

As a result, pond owners and way too many installers simply rely on a pond treatment to solve the problem. Natural pond treatments are certainly part of the program, and problem-solver pond

It is OK to perform a 25-percent water change in the spring as part of the cleaning process, but do not perform repeated water changes just because the water is pea-green.

treatments might be the right thing to implement to help a pond get back in balance. However, way too many times, these are used to treat the symptoms instead of correcting an underlying persistent problem.

Ecological Balance

In the spring, pond water goes through a natural balancing process. Algae and beneficial bacteria feed on the same nutrients in the water column.

However, single-cell algae and string algae are active, while beneficial bacteria are slow to become fully active until the water temperature surpasses 45 degrees Fahrenheit. (Bacteria really get going in the 50s.) So, algae are at the banquet table without a lot of competition. In

a perfect spring, when temperatures rise and hold, this process will take two weeks. It's always a good idea to get the filtration system up and running and introduce beneficial bacteria sooner than later. It is OK to perform a 25-percent water change in the spring as part of the cleaning process, but do not perform repeated water changes just because the water is pea-green. This just starts the process all over again. During the first month of the spring, as the pond



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is seeking balance and cleaning itself, clean out the filter pads weekly. Always clean the pads shortly after using an algacide or water clarifier. If they are

Pond plants should cover 25 to 33 percent of the pond to aid in nutrient uptake and to restrict sun light from aiding in algae growth.

full, they will no longer assist in removing the algae and free-floating particles from the water column. You won't need to do this as frequently during the season, but this simple practice will have significant benefits.

Summer's warmer water does not hold as much oxygen, and oxygen is extremely important for beneficial bacteria to perform properly. You may

want to turn on the aeration system during the heat of the summer. Pond plants should cover 25 to 33 percent of the pond to aid in nutrient uptake

and to restrict sunlight from aiding in algae growth. They also keep the water cooler for improved oxygen levels.

Tannins may impact the pond during spring and fall. All plant leaves have tannins, and in the spring when leaves bud out, they drop their scales, which are full of tannins. Spring maple seeds and leaves in the fall will also release

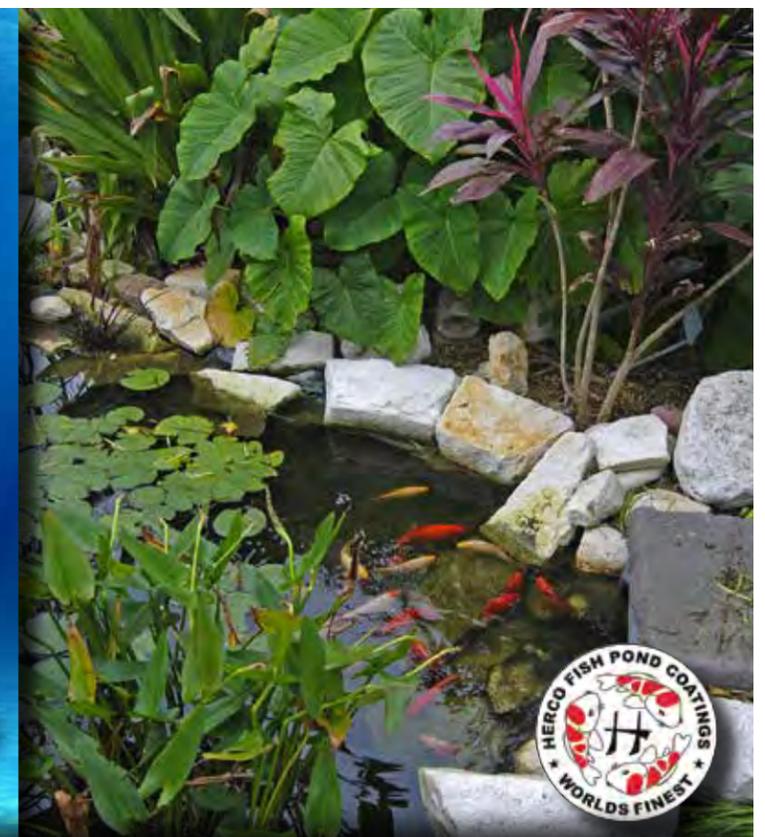
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tannins in the pond. This can cause the pond to take on a coloration ranging from a tea-brown to even black. The best practice is to use a leaf or pond net to remove the leaves. Although tannins will not harm the fish, performing a 25-percent water change will certainly aid in clearing up the water.

Achieving and maintaining healthy, ecologically balanced, "gin-clear" water relies on the teamwork of oxygen-rich water, proper timing and the application of natural-water treatments and proper filtration basics.

Diagnostic Punch List

First, are we on a proper water treatment program? The scheduled use and application of pond treatments is the first thing to always review. All natural beneficial bacteria should be applied on a regular sched-



Clean, clear water allows the eye to take in all the beauty the garden has to offer.

ule to reduce ammonia, nitrite and phosphates. To insure a high count of beneficial bacteria, especially in the first month of spring, apply all-season pond bacteria weekly. For the rest of the season, follow the instructions on the bottle. Remember, high levels of nitrates and phosphates contribute to algae blooms. Fish food not eaten within five minutes decays

and increases the phosphates in the water, which can contribute to algae. If there is a UV filter in use, turn it off for 24 hours to allow the beneficial bacteria to settle out of the water column and find a new home on the surface area, on the rocks or in the biofiltration system.

Water conditioner needs to be applied every time we add water to the pond. This removes chlorine, destroys chlora-

mines and detoxifies heavy metals. Even if the water source is a well, there are still heavy metals present. So, yes water conditioner is still a must.

Next, does the pond have sufficient filtration? So many people think they have something they don't. Proper filtration flows! The general rules are: if you do not have fish, you will need to filter the water volume once every two hours.



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A filtration flow rate that matches the fish load makes all the difference.

If you have fish, you will need to filter the water volume once every hour. And in my koi pond, I personally filter the water volume every 20 to 30 minutes, because koi need clean, healthy water, and they produce 1,000 times more waste than other varieties of fish. They are eating machines!

Let's say we have a 3,000-gallon pond with fish, and we want to filter the water volume once an hour. We will need a pump, filter and plumbing that can handle 50 gallons per minute after lift. Simple, right? Well, here are some areas where a pond can become ecologically unbalanced.

1. Perhaps the fish load has outgrown the original design and continues to overpower the filtration system. Originally, let's say the pond had a few small, 4-to-6-inch koi, and now they're each more than 18 inches. The answer is to increase the filtration or reduce the fish load. A rule of thumb is to allow 500 gallons per grown koi. If there is excellent filtration, you may get closer to 250 gallons per koi.

2. Is the pump the correct size to produce 50 gallons per minute after lift? Static lift is measured from the top of the water surface to the top of the waterfall or biofilter. It is the reduction in water flow from gravity when lifting water. If the pump is not producing the required 50 gallons per minute after lift, the rate required for proper filtration has been reduced.

3. If the pond has a pressurized filter, it could be undersized. Here's how it happens. Pressurized filters are marketed with the statement "for ponds up to X gallons." This sizing is based on a pond with no fish, or a filtration flow of once every two hours. To select the properly sized pressurized filter, match the required filtration rate to the filter's

maximum rate of flow.

4. Finally, a pond can often have the right-sized pump and still have a significantly reduced rate of flow. How does this happen? Flow rate can be restricted with tubing that is too small. Just because a pump has a 2-inch outlet does not necessarily mean 2-inch tubing is enough. Know the maximum recommend gallon-per-minute flow rates for flex PVC pipe:

- 1 inch = 25 gpm (1,500gph)
- 1 ½ inches = 60 gpm (3,600 gph)
- 2 inches = 90 gpm (5,400 gph)
- 3 inches = 225 gpm (13,500 gph)

To round out the Diagnostic Punch List, make sure the pond has enough of the right types of plants. Plants play an extremely important role in the ecological balance of a pond. They up take nutrients and help keep the water cooler in the summer, shading the water from the sun. Water hyacinth and water lettuce perform this task well, and their long root systems are fantastic at cleaning. There should be a balance of bog, submerged and floating plant life.

From the Medicine Cabinet

Algaecides and water clarifiers are only necessary when a pond needs assistance getting back into a natural balance. Water clarifier is a formula that clears murky water quickly. It attracts and congregates suspended particles, allowing them to settle out of the water column for removal by the filtration system. Use only treatments designed for backyard ponds with fish. And when using these products, make sure the pond has oxygen-rich water from waterfalls or bottom-diffused aeration.

I have often thought that it would be so beneficial if all installers provided new, proud pond owners with written information outlining the basics on maintaining the ecological balance, what to expect from Mother Nature, a guide to



When it all comes together, all that's left is to enjoy the pond life.



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pond treatments and the importance of pond plants and proper filtration. These concepts might seem basic to some of us, but just being aware of them can make a world of difference for all pond owners. ☞



About the Author

Rick Smith serves as the director of sales and business development with EasyPro Pond Products and has 37 years of organizational leadership in the lawn and garden, nursery and water feature industries. Rick has appeared in various business trade publications both as an interviewee and as a contributing author. In addition, Rick has been a speaker at national trade shows, county extension services and Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park on the topics of lawn and gardens, wild birds and water gardening.



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Blue Thumb Publishes 2018 Catalog

Blue Thumb's 2018 wholesale catalog is now available, packed with more than 180 new professional-grade fountain introductions! With more than 164 pages of professional-grade equipment for fountains, pondless waterfalls and ponds, his year's catalog is filled with projects for you to design, install and maintain profitably.

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Blue Ridge Koi and Goldfish Unveils Probiotic Plus, a New Line of Fish Food for the 2018 Pond Season

This new product line comes in response to the federal government's removal of all medicated koi food from the market. Where medicated koi food sought to stop and heal infection after it had already set in, Probiotic Plus boosts koi immunity and prevents infection from ever starting.

Probiotic Plus is formulated with three key ingredients — elevated Vitamin C, Primalac probiotic and montmorillonite clay — all scientifically shown to boost immune system function.

In addition to enhanced immunity, Probiotic Plus also increases digestion and growth rates, enhances coloring and provides essential minerals and trace elements that are typically filtered out of municipal water sources.

"We are really excited about this new product line," said Randy LeFever, president and co-owner of Blue Ridge Koi and Goldfish. "There was a big hole left in the market by the forced removal of medicated koi food, and we believe dealers and retailers can fill that hole with Probiotic Plus, all while offering their customers a food that keeps their fish in peak physical health."

More information on Probiotic Plus can be found at www.blueridgekoi.com/probiotic. Dealers and distributors interested in purchasing Probiotic Plus may contact Blue Ridge at 800/334-5257 or staff@blueridgekoi.com.



Aquility Systems Inc. Announces New Packaging for its EasyFill Line of Miniature Auto-fill Systems



Aquility Systems Inc., an international industry leader in auto-fill technology, announced new packaging for its Level Waters EasyFill auto-fill systems for fountains, ponds and other water features.

The new packaging will provide customers with more information about the product, while allowing for a more effective retail display of EasyFill systems.

"These new boxes are eye-catching and informative with a sleek design that will show the product better," said Hollye Merton, founder and president of Aquility Systems.

The new packaging will speed up shipment processing, lower costs and pass on the savings to its distributors. It will also help hold down prices for its customers. To demonstrate the effectiveness of the new packaging — and for just some plain old fun — a few members of the Aquility Systems production crew created a competition called "Box Wars" to see which packaging design would be the fastest to ship. The old and new boxes were pitted against each other in a head-to-head race to package the MLS-3401 EasyFill system. In the end, the new packaging came together much more quickly. According to Aaron Ermlich, they are "much easier to put together." Mark Galli did a great job with the old box, but the new box was much simpler, with fewer labels to affix.

"We are really excited about the new look that the new packaging will offer to this growing product line," Merton said. The new boxes feature dual sombrero hanging holes, an aqueous finish and five-panel design with easy-opening side flaps. At the beginning of 2018, the new boxes will be used for all four EasyFill systems: MLS-3401, MLS-1002, MLS-1403 and MLX-45.

For more information or distributor opportunities, contact the company at 352/332-1549 or at info@aquilitysystems.com.



New Atlantic Water Gardens Pond Diffuser Kits

Atlantic Water Gardens now makes it easier to provide a one-stop solution for your aeration needs.

New for 2018, two new professional aeration kits include air pumps with 6-foot cords, 8-inch diffusers, fittings, check valves and 3/8-inch weighted tubing. These high-oxygen output kits are specially designed for larger water gardens and koi ponds with greater oxygen demand, with professional 8-inch circular diffusers designed to maximize upwelling and water circulation.

The single diffuser kit, TADKIT1800, features our aluminum-bodied TA1800 air pump with one professional diffuser for ponds up to 6,000 gallons. The TADKIT3600 pairs the heavy-duty metal TA3600 air pump and two professional diffusers for ponds up to 12,000 gallons.

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Little Giant Aeration System Promotes Water Beautification and Biological Pond Health

Franklin Electric Co. Inc. offers the Little Giant Aeration System, which allows contractors to provide a solution for water beautification and biological pond health challenges. This multi-functional, 1/2-horsepower aeration system is capable of moving up to 500 gpm — great for bodies of water up to 1/2 acre in size, making unit-sizing simple. The system is ready to use out of the box, coming standard as an all-in-one package that includes the float, aerator and a proven Franklin Electric motor to keep water clean and healthy. The system requires 115 Volts and a minimum depth of 18 inches of water to operate. In addition, the aeration system can be used for decorating bodies of water, agitating water, preventing ice and mixing.

One unique feature of the Little Giant Aeration System is its ability to quickly transform into an attractive fountain display. An optional conversion kit includes the pump head, nozzle stem and multiple fountain nozzles. After easy installation of your selected fountain nozzle, the system provides up to five different spraying patterns — the Sonata, Cantata, Concerto, Staccato and Crescendo — appealing to any aesthetic preference, with average spray heights from 8 to 15 feet and average spray widths from 14 to 30 feet.

See the Little Giant Aeration System in action on YouTube. Additional information can be found at www.lg-outdoor.com.



MARKETPLACE



Outdoor Water Solutions Introduces New Line of Solar Fountains

Outdoor Water Solutions is introducing a new line of Direct Drive high-efficiency, solar-powered fountains for 2018. Models include three different sizes designed to work in ponds from as small as a ¼ acre and up to more than 5 acres in size. This line of floating pond fountains does not require electricity, instead relying 100 percent on solar energy to operate.

Finding access to electricity for fountains can be a real challenge in many cases due to distance and location. Golf courses and many private ponds just don't want the hassle or expense of running power lines down to the edge of a pond. If power has already been run to the site, it may only be 110 volts, which is insufficient to operate larger, more impressive fountain displays — many of which require a minimum of 220 volts.

The other challenge is cost and cost allocation. Many homeowner associations and private entities don't want to pay a monthly electric bill and don't want to divide the cost between multiple parties. A major benefit of a solar fountain is that there is no ongoing electric cost, meaning no need to split up that cost for everyone to share.

Fountain sizes include ¾ horsepower, 1 ½ horsepower and 3 horsepower. All utilize high-quality pumps and motors carrying a full five-year warranty, which is the longest warranty in the industry. Other features include cable quick disconnects for ease of maintenance and winterizing, stainless steel frames and intake screens and an industry-leading control panel with solar controllers designed for optimal run time. Each fountain also includes your choice of up to five nozzle patterns.

For 2018, these fountains will be sold through our network of Elite dealers. Pricing will be comparable to other high-quality fountains on the market, with the added benefit of not contributing to the monthly electric bill.

For more information on this product or to find an Elite dealer, contact Outdoor Water Solutions Inc. at 479/756-1614, or via email at sales@outdoorwatersolutions.com.

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