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POND CONSTRUCTION

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LANGUAGE OF KOI

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# Upcoming Events

2019

July 6 - 7

**Greater Kansas City  
26th Annual Pond Tour**  
26th Annual Garden and Pond Tour  
Kansas City, Missouri  
www.kcwatergarden.com/tour-2019

August 13 - 15

**IGC Show**  
McCormick Place / Lakeside  
Chicago, Illinois  
www.igcshow.com

August 21 - 25

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

August 23 - 27

**IWGS Symposium - France**  
Paris, Giverny, Le-Temple-sur-Lo, Bordeaux  
www.iwgs.org

September 4 - 6

**Atlantic Professional Conference**  
Cleveland, Ohio  
www.atlanticwatergardens.com/apc-day

September 13 - 15

**St. Louis Koi Show & Pond Expo**  
Timberwinds Nursery  
Ellisville, Missouri  
www.nmzna.net  
www.gatewaykoiandpondclub.org

September 28 - 29

**41st Annual Central California  
Koi Society Koi Show**  
Woodward Park, Group Activity Area  
Fresno, California  
www.cencalkoi.com

October 8 - 9

**Your Pond Farm**  
Bear Creek Mountain Resort  
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October 16 - 18

**GIE+Expo**  
Kentucky Exposition Center  
Louisville, Kentucky  
www.gie-expo.com

November 5 - 7

**International Pool |Spa | Patio Expo**  
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
www.poolspapatio.com

Are you attending an event that you think others should know about? Are you hosting an event and want more people to come? Send event info to [llgelles@pondtrademag.com](mailto:llgelles@pondtrademag.com).



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# Publisher's Perspective

## Business at Hand

As I finish up the design touches of this issue, I realize that we have three solid business topics — and all three are topics you are going to want to soak in. You all know how to build beautiful ponds, but you also need to have really good business sense and advice in order to run



your company soundly and make a good profit. For no matter how skilled or artistic your work may be, your business needs to stay afloat — and, ideally, thrive!

That's where we come in. Hopefully you'll find this issue's articles about making smart hiring and operating decisions ("Legit," pg. 14), determining your real cost of doing business ("Don't Fly by the Seat of Your Pants," pg. 36), and deciding how to classify your workers ("The Hiring

Puzzle," pg. 61) helpful as you ramp up your business for the busy summer season. I found the latter article from Mark Battersby especially informative with regard to tax implications — and not to mention timely, as the summer season tends to inflate the temporary work force, raising questions about part-time versus full-time, and so forth.

Beyond the business element, as usual, we have a wide variety of other content for your reading pleasure. From multifaceted, visually stunning pond construction projects to a tour of Koi Mecca, we've got you covered. Ed Beaulieu of Aquascape wrote a fascinating article ("Does Your Pond Need a Diet?" pg. 40) that really puts into perspective the dynamic, living features of a pond. The parallels between a pond and the human body may not be apparent at first, but after reading Ed's article, you'll see that the similarities really are uncanny!

Finally, for all the craftsmen and artisans out there, we are ramping up for this year's Water Artisans of the Year contest. The entry info will come out in the next issue (Sept/Oct 2019), so remember to save all the specifications and photos of your best work of the year. The competition gets more and more intense each year, and I personally can't wait to see what masterpieces you have in store for the Supreme Stream Court this year.

Happy PONDering!



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# Between a *Rock* and a *Calm Place*

Stones and serenity secure  
this naturalistic sanctuary

**by Ryan Bunting,**  
Big Boulder Ponds

**A** guy once told me, “If you do what you love for a living, it will feel like you’ve never worked a day in your life.”

It sounds like that guy never built ponds for a living! While I do agree with this statement in the mental aspect, physically, my body disagrees. Pond building is hard work, and we all know the aches and pains of getting that 1,000-pound boulder up another inch and just a hair to the left. We all know the zombie walk from the truck to the front door after a multi-ton rock day. Sometimes I feel there is going to be a civil war between my body and mind until we plug in the pump, water flows, and the peace treaty has been signed. It is amazing what the sound and sight of running water can do for the mind, body and soul.

When I graduated high school 20 years ago, I never would have thought that this is what I would be doing with my life. Along the way, I have learned some valuable lessons about life and pond building. One of the best things is when you get to rebuild your old work and bring it up to date with your growing abilities. One of the other bonuses of living the pond life is meeting new people as customers, who eventually become good friends and your extended pond family.

## **Building Ponds & Bonds**

I met the Henrys 14 years ago when I was a 24-year-old foreman working for my former employer. My old boss designed this pond to make it feel as though the pond came from the natural wetlands behind it. The pond was 15 by 20 by 2



After days of demo, we had a clean slate to work with.

feet and had a 30-foot stream that flowed out of a 10-by-15-foot bog filter. It was beautiful, but it had flaws that I would discover over the next decade maintaining this pond. The main flaw was the lack of elevation difference between the stream, pond and



This cantilevered flagstone edge is what we call "tough meets classy."



Can you think of a better place to begin or end your day?



Joey and Rob (left) talk about the next day's menu — more rocks. In the end (right), this feature is surf-and-turf approved.



surrounding landscape. When heavy rains filled the pond, it would back up into the stream, and the fish could actually swim upstream — which seems cool, until they didn't swim back into the pond. They would have to be netted out before a predator could eat them.

After 14 years of this, along with a few other issues, the customer and I agreed to overhaul the pond. The Henrys have seen me grow as a person and a pond builder over the years, and I have become like their surrogate son. When I started my company in 2010, I went to them to seek their feedback on my maintenance program. Needless to say, the Henrys are great friends that I always enjoy seeing. They entrusted us to rebuild the pond while they were in Florida for the winter. I gave them a basic overview of the design along with my vision to bring the pond and wetlands together. They went off to Florida, and we went to work!

### Prepping the Ground Work

We had to clear the surrounding landscape in order to have working room and a materials-staging area. We had to remove over 20 tons of stone in order to have a blank slate. Removing the bog was by far the most cumbersome, as it was 4 feet deep and full of 12 to 16-inch river boulders, gravel and plant mass. It was a daunting task that I would only wish upon an enemy — but we chose to do it. After four days of demo work, we ended up with a blank slate and a massive pile of rocks that we would

have to put back into the pond. The chainsaw also made an appearance to take down a few holly trees to allow a better view of the wetlands and help cut back on solid debris in the area.

We then started excavating the new pond and filling in the bog hole so we could create a hill for the streams. The

**Removing the bog was by far the most cumbersome, as it was 4 feet deep and full of 12 to 16-inch river boulders, gravel and plant mass. It was a daunting task that I would only wish upon an enemy — but we chose to do it.**

pond needed to be raised about a foot around the edges to direct rainwater away from the pond. The former elevation of the surrounding area is what originally caused the pond flooding. Now, the pond edges shed water away. We enlarged the pond to 22 by 32 by 3 feet.

### Keep it Rocking

There are several large caves in the pond where the fish can hide when predators come around. We added an additional skimmer and pump to help handle the debris. After the hardware was installed, we started to chip away at the pile of rocks that had been waiting patiently for us. Once the interior was rocked out, we brought in another 22 tons of large boulders because, well, that's what pond builders do! These boulders were for the edges and streams, as a pond of this size requires larger rocks to

achieve the desired appearance. We placed two large boulders in the interior of the pond to create a place where the Henrys' grandkids can sit and truly enjoy living the pond life.

The pond was also brought closer to the house and was married to a flagstone patio that cantilevers over the pond, creat-

ing a truly stunning edge. This is also a great place to feed the fish or to relax with a cocktail or morning coffee. This area is also where we decided to put a boiling vase feature that used to be on the other side of the old pond. It is nestled in a little corner next to a large ornamental evergreen. This spot ended up being a perfect fit for this feature, as it is tucked away, allowing it to stand on its own. Even though it is only 7 feet away from the pond, it has its own allure and serenity without competing with the pond's beauty and size.

### Feeling the Flow

The streams were the next item on the construction docket. There are now two streams that are approximately 20 feet long, and each stream has three waterfalls. The streams are both connected to large biofalls filters to balance the ecosystem.



This multiple-waterfall stream provides the yard with relaxation and life.

The former stream only had two waterfalls. That situation didn't create a sound that traveled far, as it didn't have much elevation. These streams now create a sound that can be heard all through the house when the windows are open.

The streams were oriented in a fashion that took advantage of a natural opening in the woods behind them, which shows the canal and marsh. This orientation aligns your line of sight with this wetlands, giving the illusion that the pond is part of the canal. To accentuate this illusion, we broke out the chainsaw again. We cut out most of the undergrowth to open up this area, and it truly did bring Mother Nature's beauty into view. We also found a few logs while we were there that made great natural retaining walls in the landscape. Fourteen years ago, this detail was overlooked and not taken advantage of. Over time, we learn to look beyond the feature itself and envision how it actually fits into the overall environment that it is in. Look at what surrounds you and utilize the beauty that Mother Nature can give you. Not that all

places have a natural, majestic backdrop, but when they do, just figure out a way to incorporate it, and your water feature will truly feel like it was always there.

Being a pond builder for the past 15 years has been awesome for many reasons. Yeah, we love digging holes and turning a pile of rocks into a one-of-a-kind, natural work of art, but there is more. I truly believe that pond customers are great people, and I am fortunate that we get to develop a relationship over time and become friends. Without that relationship, it is doubtful that the Henrys would have left for Florida and just let us build the pond as we saw fit. When customers trust a pond builder enough to just let them create, it's rewarding for everyone involved.

When I was kid, I had no idea that this would be what I would be doing for a living. Now, I can't imagine doing anything else. This business involves a lot of hard work, long hours and fights with the weather, but I am looking forward to another 15 years of digging holes, throwing rocks around and making new friends! Go live the pond life! ☘

### About the Author

**Big Boulder Pond Company** was created in Delaware 10 years ago. Since then, the company has been transforming backyards into natural works of art. They are a small company that have been runners up in the Water Artisans of the Year contest the past two years and will not rest until they win one. The goliaths of the pond industry need to be aware that the David of southern Delaware is on the hunt! All the ponds are approved by the company dogs — Remi, Rosie and the new addition, Niko.



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# LEGIT

## Avoid the dangers of hiring unlicensed workers

A reputable contractor will explain the project and what to expect both during the work and once it's done. They will also be available to answer questions long after the project is complete.

### | Legit **Workers** |

by **Dominic Carone**,  
So-Cal Ponds, Inc.

**W**e were out on a sales call, visiting a homeowner who wanted to build a new pondless water feature. After discussing her desires, we began to talk about access. While doing so, I noticed a large, black stain on her driveway. I asked her what had happened. She exhaled and went on to describe how she had hired a day laborer to clean up and paint the rod iron fence on her hillside. The gentleman doing the work slipped and tumbled down the hillside, falling off the 5-foot block wall and landing on her paved driveway, spilling a gallon of black paint. The worker suffered a broken leg and a concussion, along with lots of scrapes and bruises. Emergency services were called, and an ambulance came to take the worker to the hospital. The worker had a large medical bill, which the homeowner was now responsible for. The homeowner said she would never hire an unlicensed, uninsured worker again, as that incident had cost her thousands of dollars and a lot of stress.

As a business owner and contractor in Southern California, I know firsthand that all the licenses and insurances that businesses and contractors must obtain are a pain in the butt and can get very expen-

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sive. So, why do we do it? Why do we bother to hire actual employees when we could just hire a day laborer to work for less than we would probably pay in workman's compensation insurance for one employee? Why is it important for a contractor to have those licenses and insurances? And why is it important for the homeowner to pay a little extra

**Through hiring a professional, the homeowner can rest assured that warranty, damages and payments will be handled correctly, legally and professionally.**

in order to hire a contractor with these items? I find myself answering these questions quite often, and this is what I will discuss in this article.

Through hiring a professional, the homeowner can rest assured that warranty, damages and payments will be handled correctly, legally and professionally. As a legit company, it is important to make sure your vehicles and equipment are properly insured, maintained and in good working order. In California, we are required to have a state landscaping contractor's license, carry general liability insurance and have workman's compensation insurance, along with many individual local city business licenses.

**Building Relationships**

Over the years that I have been designing, building and maintaining ponds and landscapes, I have visited hundreds of homes and met even more people, families and probably an equal number of our four-legged friends. Sometimes, we just talk about ponds and what needs to be done. We do the work, and off we go, never to talk to them again. But with most of our clients, we have built a long-standing relationship with them.

Many have seen me grow from a wild, 20-year-old kid to a husband, father and

business owner. Some of these longtime clients even came to visit us in the hospital after my first daughter was born. With one of my first clients, I was able to see their 1-year old son — who would come out in his superhero underoos and rain boots to help me clean the pond (Sorry, Max!) — grow up, get his driver's license, go off to college and prepare to graduate from a major university.

We take pride in our ability to maintain lasting relationships with our clients. I have always wanted to provide our clients with a sense of confidence that we are here to help. I always

want the clients to know we have their best interests at heart, something you may not get with "some guy and a pickup."

For the homeowner, they have trust that we, the contractor, care about the work we do and won't rip them off. Having a "go-to" contractor makes life easier for the client, but as a contractor, it's just as beneficial — if not more! It's common knowledge that it costs about five times as much to attract a new customer than it does to keep an existing one. The first rule of any business is to retain clients and build a loyal relationship with them, thereby



A uniform (bottom) helps with branding and develops recognition and a sense of unity as your staff crafts its works of art (top).



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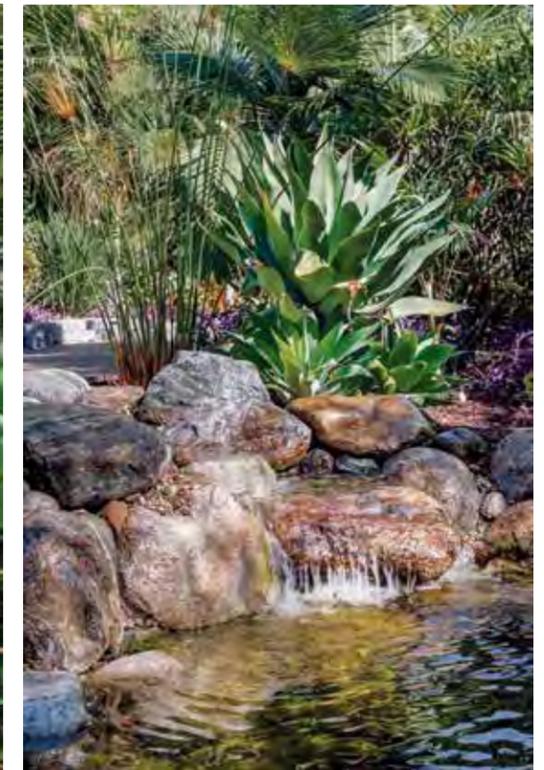


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After each new pond build or upgrade, an experienced pond contractor will explain the cycling process on a new pond, leaving the client with a sense of understanding and trust in the project.

avoiding client acquisition costs. If you're not at least attempting to follow this rule, what does that say about your business?

As an example of the kind of feedback you should be looking for, here's a testimonial from a recent customer: "Dominic did such an excellent job of really listening to what we wanted and what we needed logistically. Somehow he took all of the guidelines that we conveyed to him and was able to make those come to life in a way that we could never have imagined. He really listened and then was able to put his own creative spin on that in a way that accomplished all of our logistical needs as well. The wonderful part is that he created the whole pond system, and his company is doing all the weekly maintenance. So, they know the system intimately, and it is stress-free for us!"

### A Red Flag

Not caring about building a lasting relationship should be a red flag. Why wouldn't a contractor want to build a relationship with their client? Are they just making as much money as they can

before they slip out of town? Are they using cheap products that will only last a few years before falling apart and failing? A reputable company cares about their reputation and image and therefore would do everything in their power to maintain that image and keep their clients happy.

A contractor who cares about their work will ensure that the homeowner feels comfortable with the new edition to their house or water feature. Go over warranty, operating procedures and maintenance, and make sure you give them copies of warranty paperwork to leave the client without worry.

### Liability Insurance

Did you know that in California, if a homeowner hires an unlicensed, uninsured contractor, there is little to no way for them to cover themselves if the contractor skips out on the job (i.e., takes your money and runs) or gets hurt?

When a contractor has adequate liability insurance, the client does not have to worry about covering the costs that might result from such an accident.

However, if this contractor does not have coverage and gets hurt on the job, the homeowner could be financially responsible to cover the damages, which might include hospital bills, rehabilitation costs, lost wages, loss of earning capacity, home care and pain and suffering — on an indefinite basis.

A homeowner may think hiring an unlicensed professional just one time isn't a big risk. However, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), one in 10 construction workers is injured every year. One in 10 may not seem like a lot, but imagine you're sitting at a casino table with a pocket full of chips, with 1:10 odds that you'll walk away with thousands of dollars. You may consider the odds in your favor. But, flip it around to 1:10 odds that your "day-laborer" is going to get hurt and cost you thousands of dollars — is that a gamble you're willing to make?

### Don't Risk it

So, is it worth hiring an unlicensed or uninsured contractor to save a couple



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bucks today? Homeowners, remember to ask for proof of licenses and insurance. And contractors, make sure you are insured and carry all the proper licenses required for your area.

If you're a contractor who hires uninsured day laborers, you should realize that this reflects poorly on your business. In this day and age, there's little possibility that any sort of incident would not be displayed publicly on social media or local neighborhood pages.

Hiring someone who is not part of a legit company means there is a greater risk that the homeowner, client or general contractor can be taken advantage of, often due to not having a legal contract in place to help outline the scope of work, payment schedules and legal responsibilities.

Hiring a "local guy" probably means that they are not paying the proper taxes and insurances, and therefore may be hiring anybody they can find to work for them. It also means you're letting random, possibly non-vetted people into your home

or yards to perform work while you may not be at home.

### Operate Legitimately

Are you a quality builder who wants to make the best product possible? When building a pond or landscape, we should never cut corners or take the cheap way out, as it only hurts the industry as a whole.

Hiring a legit employee means the person you are hiring is legal to work in the United States and pays taxes. The company then pays its fair share of local taxes for improvements to roads, schools and parks. Going by the books essentially helps to build the local economy.

If you are looking to hire a legitimate contractor, make sure you ask for proof of general liability and workman's compensation insurance. Make sure they are licensed to work in the area and have local reference projects to share with you. Always get a clear idea about the contractor's warranty. ☞

### About the Author

**Dominic Carone** is the president and founder of So-Cal Ponds, Inc. He has been in the water garden business for over 20 years and still loves what he does. Dominic is a loving husband with two small children. He believes in a strong family bond, and while this company is his passion, his main focus will always family. He believes his work is art and strives to create natural-appearing landscapes and water features.



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Course Management | SPLASH!

A crash course in managing golf course waterscapes

by Patrick Simmsgeiger, Diversified Waterscapes

Imagine you have a golf course with 10 water features. Two are functioning perfectly, three are much harder to manage, and five may only require simple preventative measures. Usually, the tougher cases will eventually motivate golf course superintendents to seek a specialist, for every lake has its own distinctive features. Maintenance and upkeep can be quite complex, especially when managing multiple lakes.

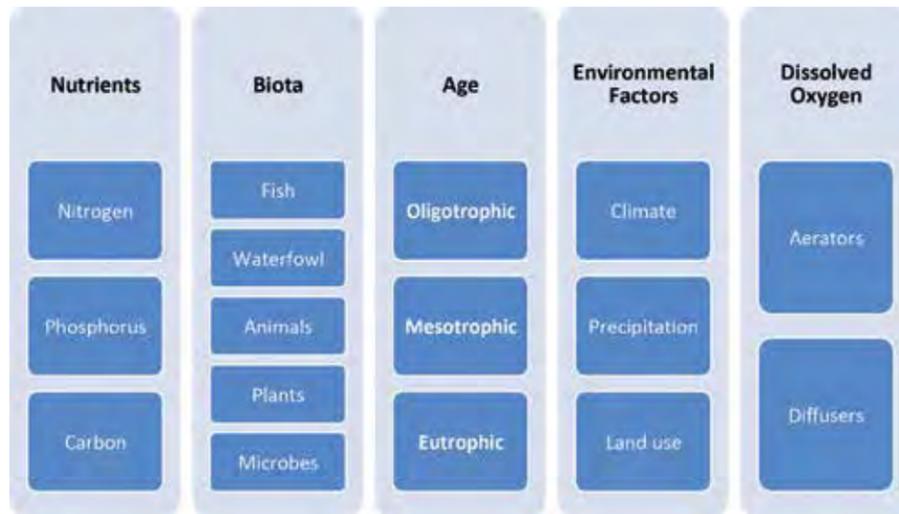
So where does one start? In order to properly manage lakes or ponds in your golf course, one must be proficient in three areas. First, you must understand the factors that contribute to a lake's ecological health.

Next, it's important to know the issues that will arise based on those elements. Only then can you reach a solution that is specifically aimed at the problem.

There are countless factors that could be contributing to or disrupting the balance of your lake ecosystem. First off, we can start by identifying the determinants of lake health. These include nutrients, biota, age, environmental factors and dissolved oxygen.

Nutrient Sources

Aquatic nutrient sources can include sediment and vegetation in the lake and runoff water from surrounding turf areas. In general, excess nutrients can be sourced from agriculture, sewage, chemical discharge and homeowners. Nutrient runoff can especially become an issue during dry weather, when



These are the top five disruptive factors in a golf course waterscape ecosystem.



Grass clippings (middle) are treated with enzymes. A well treated lake (bottom) using chemicals and biological products enhances this vista, reflecting the beauty of its surroundings.

there is an increase in evaporation and a decrease in nutrient flow. With too much nutrient input, a lake can eventually fall victim to a series of detrimental environmental consequences.

It goes without saying that runoff as a sole factor from highly fertilized turf is bound to wreak havoc on your waterscapes. Debris from tree leaves is another major source of nutrients in ponds. The tips of grass clippings contain the highest level of nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorus. If these clippings eventually make their way into a body of water, remember that today's grass clippings can become tomorrow's algae bloom. With an increasing amount of nutrients accumulating over time, it provides a food source for algae, increasing the likelihood and spread of these algal blooms. Additionally, the decomposition of algae and other plant matter releases nutrients and adds to a lake's biomass.

### Biota

The living components of a lake or pond ecosystem, or biota, can serve as indicators for a healthy lake ecosystem. If your lake is in a healthy balance, it will be able to serve as a habitat and support biodiverse species. On the other hand, an overabundance of plants, animals and microbes can begin to get out of control if the balance is disrupted. For example, if dissolved oxygen levels begin to drop drastically, it will no longer be able to support certain species of fish, marine organisms and aquatic plants. Too much waterfowl can also impact surrounding plant species and exponentially increase nutrient intake in the body of water.

### Age

Oligotrophic lakes are clear and deep, containing very low levels of nutrients and low primary production. It is characteristic of young lakes. Mesotrophic lakes contain some nutrients, organic accumulation and occasional algae. This is typically the age most lakes will fall into. Eutrophic lakes are nutrient-rich with high primary production and can be

subject to frequent algal blooms. Other common characteristics include heavy accumulation of organic matter and low clarity. Eutrophic lakes, being the most degraded with age, usually tend to be the most problematic.

### Environmental Factors

Major environmental factors that can affect the health of your lake include climate, temperature increases, precipitation and land use. More frequent droughts and shifting precipitation patterns lower water levels in lakes, leaving less water to dilute pollutants. Higher temperatures cause more frequent algal blooms and reduce dissolved oxygen levels, which have the potential to cause fish kills and render significant harm to the ecosystem as a whole.

### Dissolved Oxygen

Aquatic organisms require oxygen to breathe and survive. Dissolved-oxygen



concentrations must be maintained above a certain threshold for fish and other species to perform respiration. Healthy systems include aerators, diffusers, fountains, waterfalls and other mechanisms to supplement natural agitation and increase dissolved-oxygen concentrations.

### Tackling Issues

Issues are dependent on the water-quality expectations of property manag-

ers. Some managers do not mind algae and do not see this as an issue. For many esteemed golf course managers, on the other hand, the clean and healthy appearance of a lake or a pond is critical. The most common issues in many golf courses are algae overgrowth, foul odors, murky water and pests.

Other major issues worth avoiding include nutrient enrichment and eutrophication. As mentioned earlier, lakes



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become eutrophic when they receive excessive nutrient inputs like fertilizers, chemicals, grass clippings and feces. Nutrients are the most common limiting factor of primary production in aquatic ecosystems. When nutrient limitations are removed, plants and algae grow

Step three is physical maintenance, which is needed at times for general cleanup and upkeep. Removal of aquatic weeds and algae can be achieved through manual labor or mechanical means. Conducting physical maintenance removes problem species directly from the site.

voirs; we are managing a delicate balance between natural aquatic organisms and the aesthetic appearance of highly visible bodies of water within the golf courses. That's our specialty. Don't assume that one thing can resolve all problems, but be motivated by the challenge. You can



One of our technicians (left) treats harmful algae blooms with F-30 Algae Control. Another technician (right) treats filamentous algae with F-30 Algae Control and F-55 Bio Zyme.

aggressively and uncontrollably.

There are all kinds of solutions; some work as promised, but none can be the solution by itself. The best approach is to start with the idea of restoring a balance by providing adequate circulation, managing nutrient levels and adjusting suspended solids with a program. The trick is not to create a new problem by overloading only one side of the equation.

### A Five-Step Program

First, aeration is a process that promotes biological degradation of organic waste. There are two types. Passive is when waste is exposed to air, and active is when a mixing or bubbling device introduces the air. Benefits of aeration include algae reduction, fish health, water-quality improvement, odor reduction, muck-accumulation reduction and mosquito-population control.

Next, filtration is the removal of impurities from water to increase clarity and quality. Types of filters include sand filters, cartridge filters, biofilters and once-throughs.

The fourth step is the implementation of plant and animal life to promote aesthetics and ecological balance. An example of achieving balance is to ensure that there are more foragers than predators in a lake.

Finally, chemical treatment can be highly effective for problematic species. In order to remove invasive plants or pests, one may resort to aquatic herbicides and algacides. In order to achieve a natural balance, a promising cocktail of a pure liquid enzyme mixed with an algacide would be a great solution. Enzymes have the vital role of not only breaking down complex waste, such as bottom pond sludge that has accumulated over time, but also enhancing natural bacteria growth. Bacteria will then consume the remaining organic waste.

### The Bottom Line

Keep in mind that much more of the earth is covered in water than land. We need to remember to give all biotic aspects of the world the respect they are due. That's what we professionals do every day. We aren't cleaning lakes and reser-

have it all if you delegate lake and pond management to a knowledgeable person. Always remember: it's nature with whom we are dealing.

When your pond gets hit with an unsightly pea-soup green appearance or starts to emit an odor, the answer won't be a single fix-all. It will be a package of solutions working together to resolve the problem. ☞

### About the Author

**Patrick Simmsgeiger**, a second-generation expert on water management, owns Diversified Waterscapes, with three locations in California. His company also manufactures water-treatment products, from clarifiers to aquatic herbicides. [www.dwiwater.com](http://www.dwiwater.com)



Alisha and Colby perform the challenging task of seaming joints up a steep slope.



| Helping **Hands** |

# Beyond Fish and Beauty

Lining a reservoir pond in southern Haiti

by **Andy Dyke**, Pondliner.com & **Paul Amos**, Kasco Marine Inc.

a constant supply of water for the hydroelectric generators that help power the hospital and town.

**P**ondliner recently got a call from the Apostolic Christian Church's outreach arm, HarvestCall. This was no ordinary inquiry about a backyard pond or a commercial water feature. They needed to line a pond in Haiti.

This particular reservoir is the water source for the hydroelectric power plant for Hospital Lumière, located in the village of Bonne Fin, high in the mountains of southern Haiti. The reservoir is a 150-by-250-foot pit of rocky soil that had an old, failed liner that no longer held water. The reservoir is an important element in controlling

## A Tall Order

The large order was for nine rolls of Firestone 50-by-100-foot EPDM rubber liner, each weighing 1,500 pounds apiece, plus all the seaming supplies and underlayment. Andy Dyke of Pondliner, taking the telephone order, soon found himself advising the mission team about specifics of materials and sealing seams. So many questions from the HarvestCall project leader, Chris Huber, led to a joint training session in Shawnee with Paul Amos, the Firestone manufacturer representative from Houston. During this meeting, Chris



Haitian workers prepare to pull the 1,500-pound, 50-by-100-foot liner panel up the slope.



Andy Dyke (top, left) shows off the intake lines for the hydroelectric generator several hundred feet below the pond. Andy applies the 6-inch cover seam tape (top, right) to complete a joint between panels. Bonne Fin kids huddle with Alisha Bahler (bottom), because spending time with locals is a critical part of helping hands.

invited the team to join the trip to Haiti to serve as hands-on help! We couldn't have been happier to accept the invite.

Complications in Haiti postponed the original plan to install the liner in early June, so the actual weeklong project took place in late August. Three HarvestCall members of the reservoir team had to return to college after the postponement, leaving only two young adult missionaries, Alisha Bahler and Colby Waibel from West Lafayette, Indiana, to help. The mission team met up in Miami for the next-day flight to Port au Prince. Once there, they endured a harrowing, five-hour van ride westward through the city, which has no traffic control, along a bumpy, narrow, mountain roadway to Bonne Fin and Hospital Lumière.

"We went there to train and supervise the Haitian workers as they unrolled and installed the underlayment and lining," Andy Dyke recounted. "Our job was to seam the liners together and ensure a

waterproof seal around two 8-inch pipes." One pipe is the inlet from the natural springs, and a lower pipe is a drain for water to run 500 feet down the mountain to the generators.

### Environmental Issues

Monday proved to be a learning day, as we got two panels in place and sealed the overlapping joint. The job was complicated by its mountain location, 16-foot depth, and steep, 45-degree sloping sides. Installation of the heavy liner sections was hampered by limited access. Mountains on one side and steep cliffs on the other forced us to deploy the liner in the bottom of the pond and then pull it up the slopes. All this was exacerbated by our not knowing the local French Creole dialect.

Although Tuesday started off better, heavy afternoon rains delayed further deployment. Wednesday morning we found ourselves with only four of nine

panels installed and a pool of water in the bottom of the pond. We needed the bucket brigades (a line of Haitian workers with 5-gallon buckets) to bale water from the reservoir.

By noon Wednesday, we had dried the subgrade, redressed the slopes damaged from erosion and installed the fifth 50-by-100 panel. With a refreshed outlook, we worked until dusk on Wednesday and were able to get all the panels installed, seams set in the entire bottom and up the slopes to the 10-foot depth mark, and the boot installed on the outlet pipe in the bottom of the pond. It was a miraculous achievement fueled by the relentless, amazing, never-say-can't Haitian workers.

### A Rousing Success

The team successfully lined and seamed everything with the help of 30 Haitian men and one Haitian interpreter. The lined reservoir is now fully fenced, and the locals get water for their personal

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The filling process begins.



The pond is filled to capacity and ready to service the generator.

use from a well pump placed outside the perimeter. Solar panels and backup diesel generators also provide electric power for the hospital and town.

All the people associated with the project completed beautiful work. The advance preparation of the Haitian workers and missionaries helped make the reservoir lining a success. We are both grateful for the opportunity to utilize our skills and knowledge to assist in this worthy cause. ☞

### About the Authors

**Paul Amos** is a sales representative for Kasco Marine, Inc. After 14 years as the managing member of Amos Sales Associates Ltd, a manufacturer's representative firm, Paul took an employment position with Kasco. Paul has sold, assisted in design and installed liners and aeration for residential ponds, golf course lakes, parks and recreation features, water and wastewater treatment facilities and more. **Andy Dyke** has been a key part of Pondliner.com success in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Andy has worked both in wholesale and retail divisions of Pondliner.com for 13 years. He participates in the largest national water garden trade shows presented annually by Shawnee's Pondliner.com. Besides helping customers, he stays familiar with the many water features that adorn the company grounds and showroom floor. His knowledge of water gardens, ponds, fountains, water features, fish and aquatic plants is as much a hobby as it is a career.



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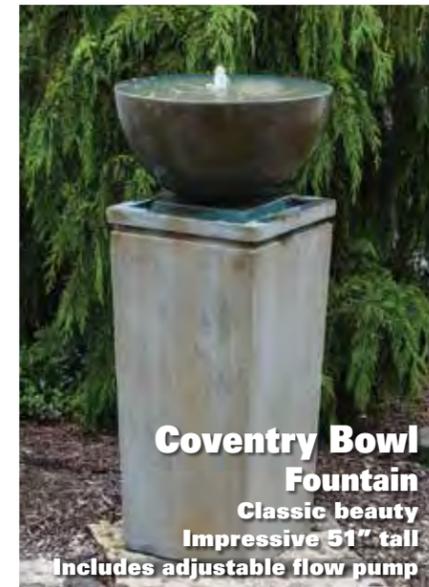
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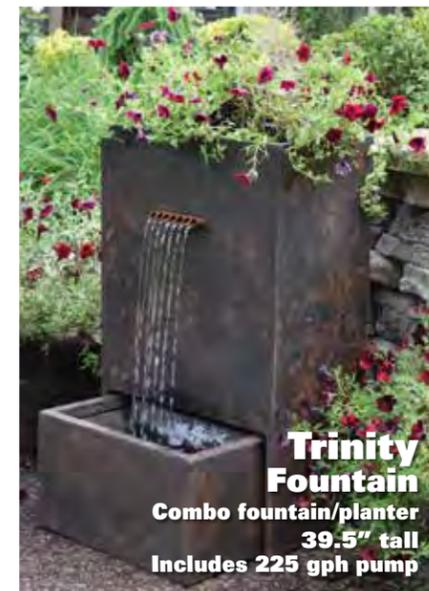
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# Don't Fly by the Seat of Your Pants

Knowing your overhead costs is a gamechanger



That plan kept us poor.  
That plan kept us running in the  
rat wheel. That plan took our family and  
our business down a path to financial ruin.

## Hope is Not a Strategy!

That “plan” was in place until three years ago, when one of those great moments in my life happened. A friend of mine, Dave, introduced me to Steve, a man who had helped him change his business (and his life). Steve introduced me to the Contractor Sales Academy, and he began to help guide our business (and family) toward a future full of hope. He asked us hard questions for me to think about. How much money do you bring home each year? How many hours do you really work? How much money does it cost you to send your crew out each day?

The question that really got me was the most basic one: “How much does it cost you to clean a water feature?” I couldn’t answer this basic question because I didn’t know my

by **John Adams,**  
Modern Design Aquascaping

**H**ere at Modern Design Aquascaping, we have won many awards and have been recognized as one of the best pond builders in the country. I don’t say this to toot my own horn; I say it because I am proof that you can be the best at what you do and still fail at the “business” end of business. I am a guy who had a business plan for 20 years that looked something like this: Work your hind end off. Work harder than everyone else. Hope for the best.



The team at Modern Design Aquascaping tears out a faulty project and rebuilds it. Tracking time and expenses on these jobs allows them to get better on each subsequent job.

**So, once you have a clear view of what your overhead expenses are, you become an open door for great decision making! You can develop a real business plan based on real numbers. It gives you power in estimating as well. I can now look at a job and make a quick estimate based on real costs.**



This waterfall has been rebuilt, but we missed our profit numbers. Why? The access was difficult, and the work had to be done by hand. The numbers we used to bid this job were from an easier work site. The lesson was learned, and a cost multiplier for difficulty was the answer for getting it right the next time!

numbers. Something I have continued to embrace to this day is that I don't know what I don't know. There is always more to learn, and there is always room to improve!

### Dig in to the Numbers

As I began my quest to understand the numbers, there were many surprises along the way. I would suggest that you get an educated guide to help you; it definitely makes the journey easier! My story started with defining my overhead. I didn't know what my overhead was. I only knew that I was paying my bills, and barely at that. So, I dug up the basic definition of overhead: all expenses incurred by a business that come in, no matter what. These are costs that are not related to production of my "widget." For me, the numbers I came up with were surprisingly high — and I don't pay myself a ridiculous wage!

The next step was to define how many days we produce our widget each year. For us, it's around 180 workdays. My overhead number, then, divided by 180 workdays, equals how much revenue I have to generate each day just to keep the lights on (with no profit for business). I was blown away. The number was \$1,000 per day, and it did not include any production at all. In other words, if our truck sat in the driveway during one of these 180 days, it cost me \$1,000. It also meant that if our team went out and cleaned three ponds, bringing in \$1,000 in revenue for the day, that was a breakeven situation for our business. The numbers depressed me, to be honest.

So, what did I learn? If the team can clean three ponds in a day, the overhead cost of the day is \$1,000. The cost of the laborers for the day is \$1,100. So, the cost for our company to produce those three clean ponds is \$2,100. Therefore, it costs us \$700 to clean each pond. There comes a point when the numbers are depressing because you have been blissfully hiding in ignorance. But this also gave me power. I knew how to tweak the numbers now. We could work more than 180 days. We could figure out how to

clean an extra pond each day by increasing productivity. We could shave some off the overhead number by reducing expenses. We had options! It is amazing how the brain begins to find solutions to problems once you acknowledge the problems exist.

### Freedom Through Calculation

So, once you have a clear view of what your overhead expenses are, you become an open door for great decision making! You can develop a real business plan based on real numbers. It gives you power in estimating as well. I can now look at a job and make a quick estimate based on real costs. The truth is, if you don't know, you are only guessing. Trust me on this one.

Studying the previous year's numbers and figuring out our overhead naturally led us to create a budget. Using the same numbers and some logic, we are now able to compare actual monthly expenses to projected expenses to be sure we are on

track. This allows us to correct course throughout the year, and it helps us to avoid financial surprises. For a lot of you, you are probably thinking the same thing I was thinking. "I got this. I don't need to do all that stuff. My system has been working just fine for me!" This number stuff can scary — but so is bankruptcy.

No matter where you are in business, there is somewhere better you can go with it. There is someone out there who is awesome at whatever you are bad at. Don't try to do it alone. Join a group like the Contractor Sales Academy, where you can interact with other people who want to grow and learn. Hang out with all the smart kids and learn something new; it might just change your life. Ask yourself the hard questions. How much money do you have to give? How much do you have to retire on? How about the people who work for you and with you — are they happy? And do you have a plan in place to keep them that way? Grow and learn. Share and inspire. Make a difference! ☺

### About the Author



**Modern Design Aquascaping Inc.** has been building ponds and waterfalls all over the world for more than 20 years. They are located in Friendsville, Tennessee, and are a family-owned and operated business. Check them out on YouTube, where they create content to inspire and educate the world on water features. [www.youtube.com/ModernDesignAquascapingInc](http://www.youtube.com/ModernDesignAquascapingInc) 865/995-1234 [www.MDAquascaping.com](http://www.MDAquascaping.com)

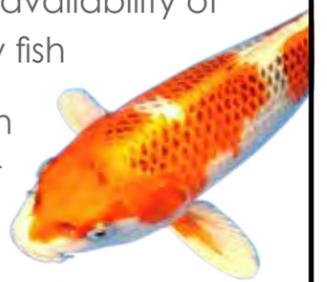
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# Does Your Pond Need a **DIET?**

Understanding the parallels between humans & ponds

by **Ed Beaulieu**,  
Aquascape Inc.

**Y**ou're probably thinking I've lost my mind at this point, but let me explain. Aquatic ecosystems have a lot of similarities to our bodies — we're both a product of our diets. In fact, if you just look around, you'll see similarities between lots of different ecosystems as they relate to food production and consumption.

## The Human Body

Let's start with the human body to get a baseline. Our bodies are living machines that are able to utilize outside resources such as food, water and oxygen to sustain us. After a series of internal biological processes, these resources allow us to grow, move, think and procreate similar to other animals; the thinking and reasoning piece, however, is unique to our species. Internally, we have specialized organs and tissues that can utilize the nutrients and energy produced from these nutrients for our day-to-day activities.

Our bodies are incredibly complex and amazing. Despite all the complexities, we still rely on foreign cells (bacteria, fungi, protists, etc.) that have a unique relationship with us that, while not fully understood, is critical for our survival. These foreign bodies help with a variety of biological processes,

including digestion, with the breakdown of complex proteins, carbohydrates and fats into usable forms for us on a molecular level. Depending on our diet (what we eat and how much we eat), our bodies will

and energy to process the food into a usable form. It would be wasteful to get rid of it, because we may need it in the future, and so it's transformed into a valuable reservoir, which we call fat. A small amount of fat is



Algae blooms are normal in the spring before plants have fully grown and fish are active.

adapt accordingly. We all grew up with our parents and teachers telling us, "We are what we eat," and they're 100 percent right! I cannot leave out genetics or physical activity, because they have a huge impact on our bodies and how they function.

When we eat too much with low physical activity, our bodies will store the excess nutrients that have been processed for future use. This is an important adaptation, because we've already invested in the consumption

actually important for our survival, but it can get out of control. When this happens, our bodies react negatively. Excess weight makes it more difficult for us to move around efficiently and puts an additional strain on our joints, lungs, heart, etc. These stressors will likely shorten our lifespan.

## What About Ponds?

I don't think any of you are reading this to learn about diets and exercise, so let's

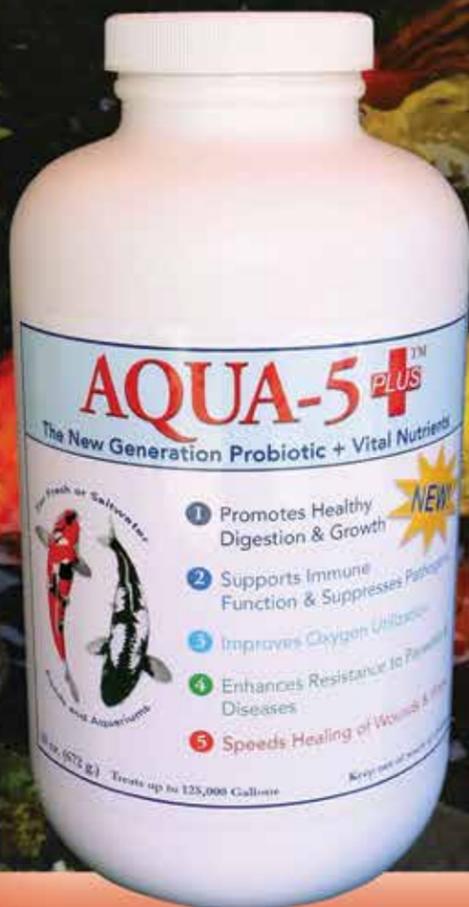
Ecosystem ponds create an ideal environment for a variety of plants and fish.

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transition into how this is similar to a pond.

Ponds are also living machines that require outside resources such as food, water and oxygen. And just like us, they rely on a host of other foreign organisms to survive. Food comes in the form of two sources, both external and internal. External food and nutrients are known as allochthonous materials. They're comprised of anything that's deposited into the water from an outside source, such as windblown leaf debris, organics that have been washed into the pond, fish food, etc. Autochthonous material is generated within the ecosystem and includes algae, aquatic vegetation, organic benthic sediments and more. Typically autochthonous material does not cause a lot of problems, because these compounds are growing from the nutrients already within the system. They're recycled internally through photosynthesis and the process of decomposition.

Allochthonous material, on the other hand, can be thought of as overeating. The food and nutrients are coming in, but they're not being used completely by the ecosystem, so it's stored as a nutrient reserve. Similar to our bodies, a small amount of stored nutrients, organic sediments and fat are OK, but too much puts stress on the system. Healthy aquatic ecosystems will utilize the nutrient input as food for aquatic invertebrates, and the rest will be broken down by bacteria and fungi into simple compounds that will either stay locked up in the sediments or will be released into the water as soluble forms of food for a wide variety of primary producers (phytoplankton, string algae, aquatic plants, etc.). In aquatic ecosystems, this process is called eutrophication, which is a normal process that occurs slowly as organic compounds accumulate. This process can be sped up when fertilizer or other nutrients are washed into a pond and can lead to an algae bloom.

### Go on a Diet

So, how do we keep the look and function of a young body or new water feature? We need to control the diet with plenty of exercise to consume any excess nutrients. Mechanical skimmer filters are one of the most important additions to a well-designed water feature, and if you have a limited budget, I would recommend this as your first purchase. The reason is simple; the skimmer will capture allochthonous materials from the surface of the pond, where it easily can be removed from the system. This simple step will help to control the available food in the ecosystem. This is like going on a restricted diet — you'll start losing weight, because your body will utilize the stored food to keep your body functioning.

A mechanical skimmer requires a pump and



A mechanical skimmer is your first line of defense in removing unwanted debris from a pond.



Healthy ponds provide hours of enjoyment for all ages.



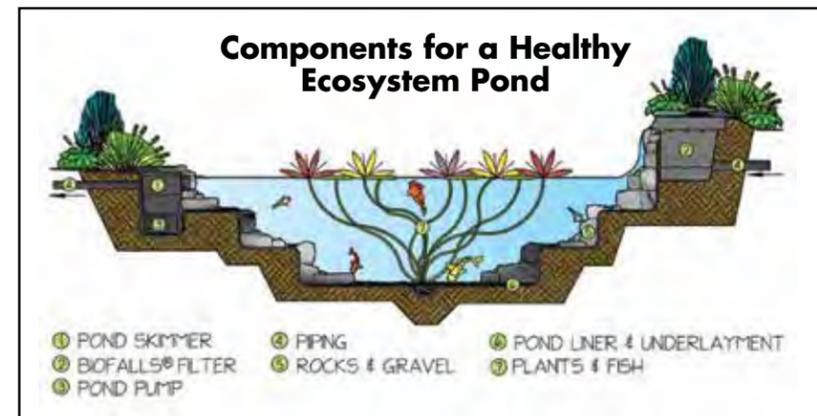
Ecosystem ponds (top) maintain a proper balance of filtration, circulation, fish, plants, rock and gravel. Floating plants such as water lettuce (bottom) help to filter pond water.

pipings to operate. The pump acts like the heart and blood vessels within our body, and its job is to circulate the water, just like our heart circulates our blood. The process of circulation delivers oxygen and nutrients throughout the ecosystem exactly like our circulatory system. Increasing

degrade more organic compounds. This becomes more important when the bioload, or the amount of fish or other aquatic organisms, increases.

### Oxygen, Oxygen, Oxygen!

This is an important piece of the



the aerobic capacity in our bodies allows us to consume more nutrients while maintaining a healthy weight. Increasing the aerobic capacity of a pond will feed more oxygen to the microbiota, allowing them to

puzzle, because without it, we suffocate. A lot of you may be thinking aerators when I say oxygen. While they do aerate the water, it's not in the way you're probably thinking. Aerators are a cost-effective way to move water up



Fish play an integral role (left) in the health of a pond by consuming algae. A waterfall (right) provides aeration to sustain the health of a pond.

to the surface of the pond, where it comes into contact with the atmosphere, allowing for gas exchange. The actual amount of oxygen transfer that happens between the air bubble and water is very small because of the short contact time and surface area of the actual bubbles. A properly sized skimmer and pump can handle a typical backyard water garden.

A pond also needs a healthy biofilter, which is similar to our digestive system. The

high surface area of the filter pads and biomedium is the perfect home for nitrifying bacteria that will efficiently reduce nitrogenous compounds into nitrite and nitrate. This also happens within our intestines, where the high surface area houses a unique mixture of microorganisms that break down complex proteins and carbohydrates into usable food.

If you're an elite athlete and push your body to the limits of its function, you need to follow a clean diet and healthy exercise

regimen. You'll also probably take dietary supplements and probiotics to increase your level of performance. Beneficial bacteria, along with the proper mixture of water treatments, will increase the performance of your water feature to ensure optimal functioning.

### Mind the Unknowns

This all sounds simple, but with any living system, there are a lot of unknowns

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that can completely throw off the entire system! Humans get sick despite taking good care of themselves because of viruses, bacterial infections, parasites, cancer and a variety of other stressors that will impact our performance, possibly leading to serious illness or death. Ponds are no different; you can do everything right but still struggle with poor water quality, algae blooms, sick fish and so on. This can be due to environmental factors that you're not aware of, existing water quality parameters or new fish added to the populations.

I can say this with confidence, though: If you have a systematic way of creating your water features and you utilize the proper mixture of skimmers, biofilters, pumps and water treatments, your odds of success will increase exponentially, and you'll be able to quickly diagnose a problem when it arises.

I hope you're starting to see the parallels between the human body and a pond. We all have the ability to manage our living machines and control the outcome when we understand how all the pieces work seamlessly together. ☺

## About the Author



**Ed Beaulieu** came to AquaScape in 1993 as a construction laborer, but a little creativity and a positive outlook on life and business helped catapult him to the

position of director of contractor development and field research. Ed has successfully built over 1,000 custom-designed ponds, from small backyard water gardens to large lakes and commercial water features. He holds a bachelor's of science in zoology with an emphasis in limnology and master's studies in marine biology.

Ed's work has been featured on the cover of Architectural Digest, Better Homes & Gardens special interest publications and more.



Niigata is majestic in the fall.

# Koi Mecca

A visit to Niigata, Japan for **koi appreciation**

by **Taro Kodama**,  
Kodama Koi Farm

Located more than 200 miles north of Tokyo, Niigata is surrounded by mountains of mountains. Heavy snowfall in winter is famous. It can be as high as 10 feet. Niigata used to be an inaccessible corner of the island during winter. Although it was such an inconvenient area, the soil was rich, and the water was pure. Therefore, Niigata became famous not only for koi, but also for the best rice and the best sake in Japan.

The Ojiya and Yamakoshi areas in Niigata are considered the birthplace of Nishikigoi, or koi in short. Serious koi hobbyists and dealers from all over the world will religiously visit this area

every year. Carp as a food source has long been available anywhere in Asia, but Niigata is the only place where food carp evolved into living jewels. It has a lot to do with the environments, history and people.

Some refer to Niigata as Koi Mecca. Some may have it on their bucket list, but whether you are in the koi business or just a hobbyist, Niigata is an essential place to visit for everyone. My family has more than 50 years of history visiting the Niigata koi breeders. I'd like to explain why it is so important for koi hobbyists and dealers to visit this region of Japan.

## Superstar Gazing

I believe koi is an art, and breeders are artists. In Niigata, you have oppor-



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It's harvest time in Niigata.

tunities to meet and talk to the artists of your favorite works of art. Dainichi, Isa, Marudo, Hoshikin, Sekiguchi and all the famous breeders you have heard so much about are all in Niigata. There is a good chance you have one of their koi in your pond.

You can visit them, see their latest artwork and ask questions. You can feel their passion and visions of the koi they are trying to create. You may even have an opportunity to go out and drink with them. Knowing them personally is understanding their koi.

Niigata is both the place to meet these superstar artists and a place to find your dream koi.

"The selection is by far the most extensive, and there is nothing quite like personally selecting a Japanese koi directly from the farm," says Dr. Malone, one of our clients. When he first came to Niigata, he told me it was his first and last time to visit, as it had been on his bucket list. Well, he has been back to Japan every year since for the last seven years. Clearly, he became addicted to visiting Niigata.

**Koi Education**

For dealers including myself, Niigata provides the seeds of our business. We of course buy koi for our stores, but this is only one of the many reasons we visit Niigata. The other aspect is the experience and the knowledge you can earn at this Koi Mecca. A wider knowledge and deeper understanding of Japanese koi will help you share their value and appreciation with your customers.

Of course, visiting Niigata only for several days will not explain to you the full scope of a breeder's work, but you will be



A koi-hunting tour (left) begins with me, Taro Kodama. The inimitable moment of harvest (right) is captured at Dainichi Koi Farm's mud pond.



Tourists admire the jumbo koi.



Here's a famous koi tunnel in Niigata.

exposed to some of their efforts. You will see how much work is involved before you to pick koi for yourself or your clients. Coordinating shipping from Niigata to your store alone is a big portion of expense. A KHV test must be done to make sure that the koi are healthy for your clients. The KHV testing is time consuming and not free.

Try to visit as many breeders as possible. Expose yourself to as many koi as possible. Eventually, you will start seeing the difference in quality, characteristics of bloodlines and more.

Buying koi from a breeder is great training, too. Usually there are so many koi in one tank for the same price tag, and you need to choose what you think is the best. You can ask breeders for their opinions, too. This is a very good learning experience.

If you are in the business, it is your responsibility to fill in the knowledge gaps so that hobbyists understand the whole process and appreciate Japanese koi more deeply. Niigata is the most sacred place for koi lovers. I recommend that you visit every year if you are

in the business. Or, consider visiting at least once in your life if you are a serious koi hobbyist like Dr. Malone.

### Get Dream Koi Directly

Whether it is for yourself or for your clients, if you cannot find your dream koi in Niigata, you won't be able to find it anywhere else. There are hundreds of breeders in Niigata. Competition is severe. In order to survive, they must breed better-quality koi and breed something different from the others. Eventually they get to specialize in certain koi varieties. This is how the selection and the quality of koi in Niigata became by far the most extensive. In addition, you can personally pick and buy them from the breeders directly. You cannot get a better koi-shopping experience than this.

If you are fortunate enough to visit Niigata every year, I also recommend that you pick a few breeders to go back to every year. In doing so, you can train your eyes for the bloodline and understand what breeders are trying to accomplish through their yearly improvements.

### Watch the Harvest

You may have seen the mud pond harvest many times on YouTube, but watching a video is not the same as being there by the mud pond, watching the water being drained. You see dorsal fins out of water and get a glance of some amazing colors. They are eventually cornered by the seining net. Then, a beautiful creature is pulled out of the dirty mud pond. The moment is beyond description. Some breeders say they work so hard for the whole year just for this moment. This is the time you really feel that koi are beautiful works of art.

There are many more reasons to visit Niigata, but lastly, let me share a few things you need to know about visiting Japan, including hiring a tour guide, seasonal timing, and shipping koi.

### The Who, When & How

Choosing right person to guide you determines whether your trip is a

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success or failure. Although many breeders are close to each other, if you do not know where you are going, you could spend the whole day driving to visit only a few breeders. Besides, if breeders do not know who you are, they generally will not want to do business with you. During harvest season, breeders are always in and out. So, good coordination is very important to make your time worthwhile. Pick a person with a good command of the Japanese language who has done business with Niigata breeders for many years. It is a big plus if the person has a facility in your country. Then, he can assist you with quarantine and KHV testing.

You cannot just visit Niigata any time and expect to see a lot of koi. If you would like to see many koi, October and November is the best time, because it is the harvest season. January and February are also good, because you can visit the All Japan Koi Show in Tokyo before or after your visit to Niigata. This is the world's biggest and best koi show. About that time, Niigata has tons of snow. It is a beautiful time of the year. It is also fun

to visit breeders in the snow. If you are looking for Jumbo to sai, spring is a great time. If you are lucky, you will see the cherry blossom tree in full bloom. You can also visit the All Japan Young Koi show or International Junior Koi show at the same time. Visiting in the summertime is generally not a good idea.

In Niigata, you will see so many koi. Prices will not be bad at all, but it is also not difficult to spend more than you planned. Sometimes, we forget that it also costs money to ship koi from Japan to our country. Shipping koi is like shipping water. Check with your broker about approximate shipping costs in advance, and make sure you budget and put money aside for that, too.

Every year I take a trip to Niigata with my clients, and you are welcome to join our tour. Please learn more about the details of our excursion at [www.kodamakoifarm.com/niigata-koi-tour/](http://www.kodamakoifarm.com/niigata-koi-tour/). Now that you have more information about visiting Niigata, Japan, it is time to take action and visit the origins of koi history. I will see you there! ☺

### About the Author

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



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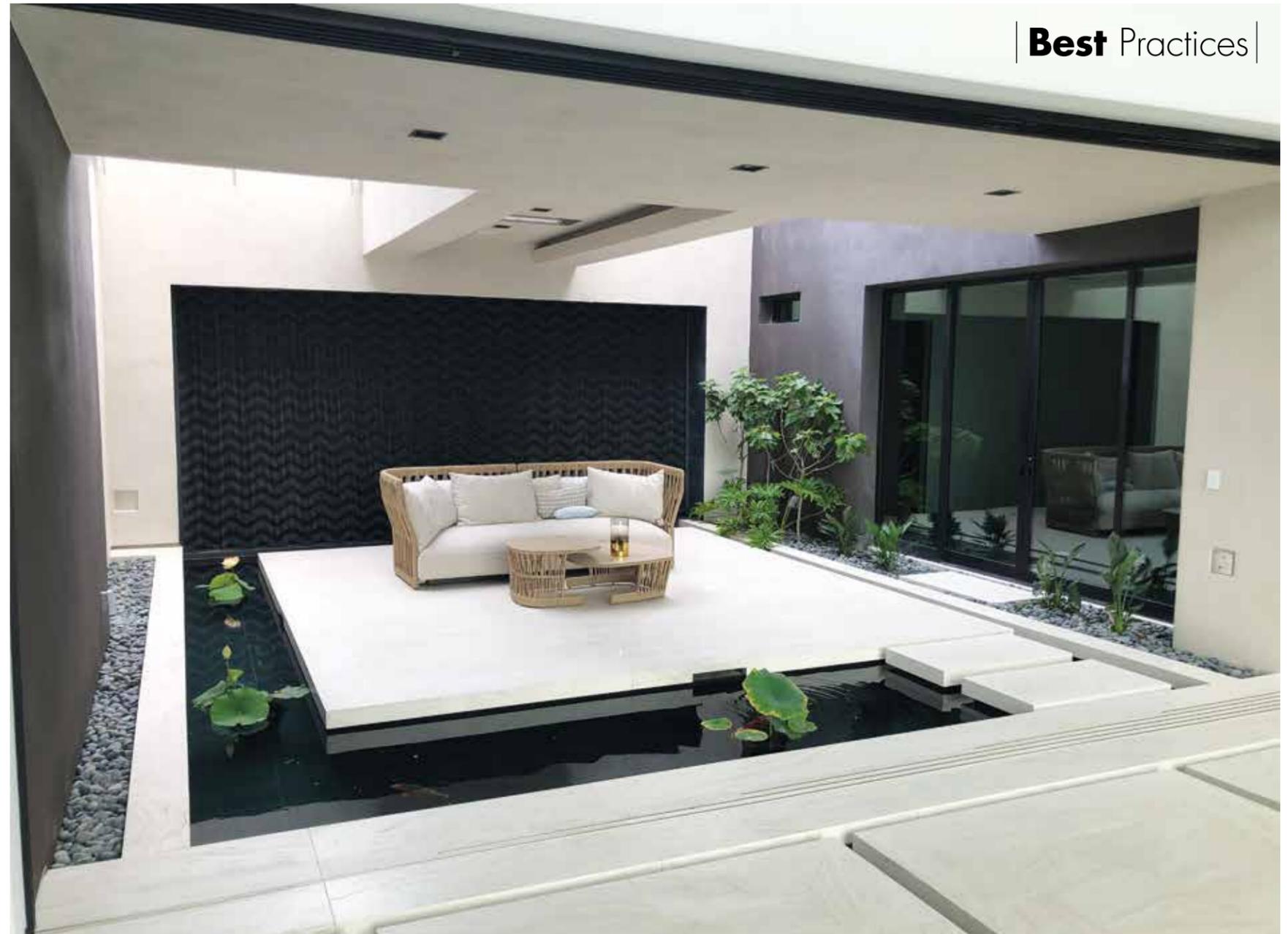
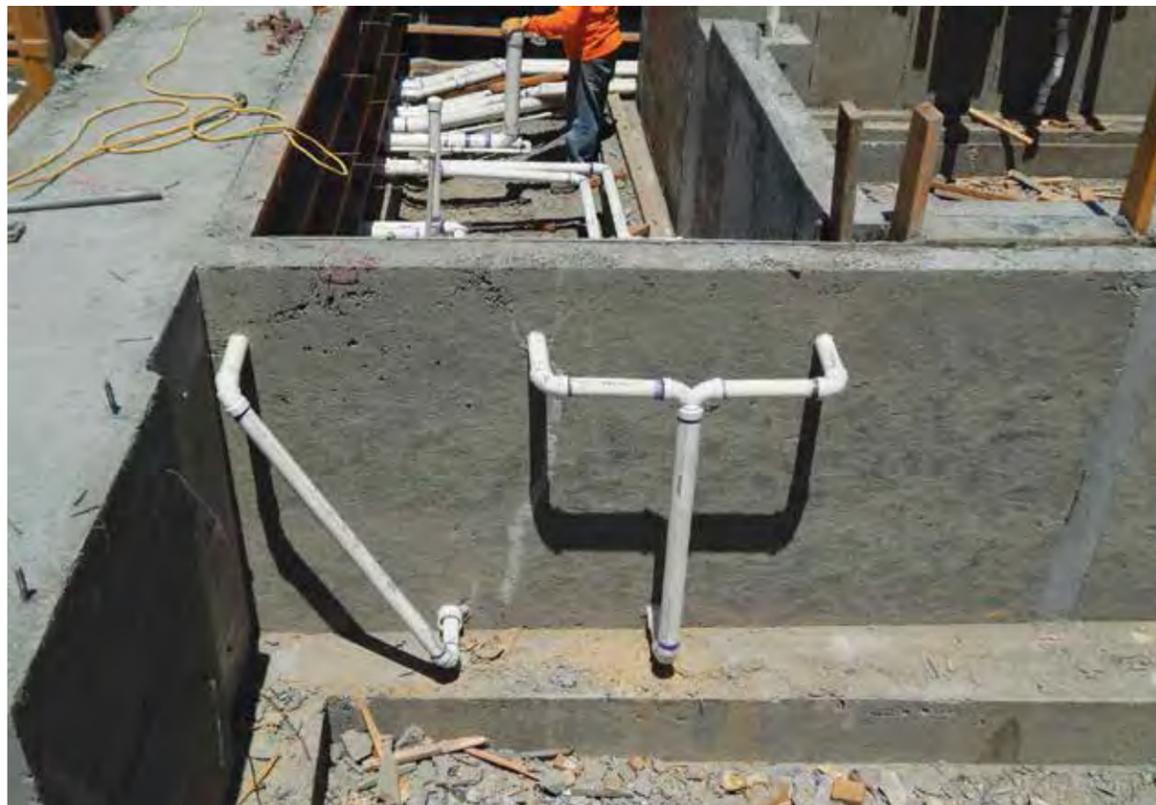


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The forms for concrete (top, left) are in and ready for plumbing. The plumbing (bottom, left) is in and installed to specs.

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

# Waking up in Vegas

## Formal courtyard pond with a view

by **Kent Wallace,**  
Living Water Solutions

**Z**ombie projects like this one are projects that come back to life after a long period of disappearance. The general contractor, Blue Heron, originally

contacted me three years ago to provide the design and supply the equipment instead of coming in after the infrastructure was finished. The good thing about this project is that I was able to make suggestions on paper before they poured any concrete. Many of these exclusive custom homes



The concrete surface has been parged and sealed. It's now ready for tile.

take two to four years to complete due to the location and complexity. This home was no exception.

Fast-forward to March 2019 when I received a call from the superintendent saying they were ready to finish up and needed the equipment. Not only had this zombie come to life, but the deadline for the opening of a home to celebrate the owner's birthday was also three short months away.

### Desert Decadence

The home was designed by Blue Heron here in Las Vegas. Anthony & Sylvan Pools was the contractor for all the water features, including the pond. The front entry of the home is high on a hilltop facing the drive entrance. The back of the home overlooks a view of the entire Las Vegas Valley. The home's entryway accesses the top floor. A pivoting gate opens to a courtyard reflecting pool where large steppingstone blocks lead to a pivoting front door. Glass railing on both sides of the reflecting pool entry open the view to the outdoor courtyard in the center of the home on the lower floor level where the koi pond is located. Once through the entry door, more glass

railing allows a full view of the koi pond, reflecting pool and large swimming pool surrounded on three sides by the home. The staircase leading to the lower level accesses motorized, four-paneled sliding glass doors that separate the courtyard koi pond from the lower hallway and indoor reflecting pool. When the glass panel doors are opened, the three lower-level water features appear connected from the water wall on the far side of the koi pond across the reflecting pool and onto the main swimming pool, all of which face the valley and the lights of the famous Las Vegas Strip. It's quite breathtaking.

In 2016, I supplied a plumbing layout and handed it to Tim from DBR Plumbing. I was glad to see Tim on the job, because he and his crew have done several koi pond-plumbing installations I've been involved with, and he knows what I need in terms of fittings — all drain waste and vent 90s and 45s, including all my penetrations.

### Filter Layout

Seeing through the eyes of the architect, I've always enjoyed formal ponds' artistic connection to a home. My job is to make as few recommendations as



The view from the pond extends across the interior reflecting pool and beyond the swimming pool.



The filter area has an LWS static suction prefilter, pump, low-pressure bioreactor, UV light and air blower.

possible, leaving the aesthetics to the owner and designer and supporting their vision. This project was no exception, with my only issue being the water wall. We agreed that it should not be part of the koi pond circulation because of main-

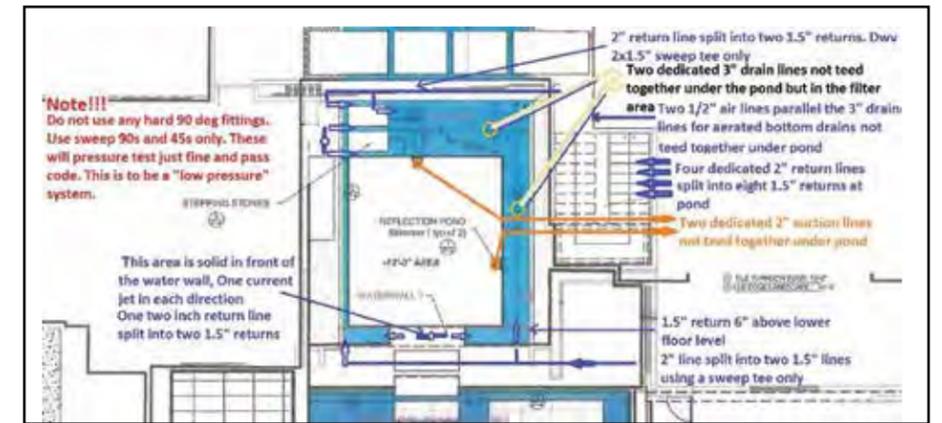
tenance and the need to keep the clean, contemporary look of the wall against the pond and interior of the home.

Given the shape, at approximately 2,800 gallons, the pond would need two 3-inch bottom drains and two skimmers

to properly remove water from the pond. Each bottom drain would have one 5-inch fine bubble diffuser mounted in the center of the dome cover. Gravity flow to the prefilter was not an option, given the location and 150-foot distance from pond to filter area. All pool and pond equipment components were to be placed in an area on the east side of the home. I would need at least eight returns to navigate the corners and niches in the angular design. I decided on four 2-inch return lines, each split into two 1.5-inch returns at the pond, except for the return below the water wall. This was a long, narrow space, so I chose a single tapered, adjustable AquaStar radial floor return that would spread out the water in all directions.

A shallow trough runs along the west side of the pond to the right of the water wall. This was handled by one 1.5-inch return with a street 90 elbow aiming the water through the narrow trough toward the steps on the north end near

the sliding glass doors. The other return from this 2-inch line was near the floor on the opposite side of the water wall, with a street 90 elbow aimed away from the water wall toward the drain on that side. Two steppingstone blocks cross the pond from the hallway to the pond's center island, extending the path of the steps from the swimming pool across the interior reflecting pool and into the koi pond. We placed 1.5-inch returns in each of the three gaps between the side, steps and center island. One 2-inch line feeds two of the 1.5-inch returns. Another 2-inch feeds the third return between the steps and a 1.5-inch return below the steps. An adjustable 1-inch eyeball is installed on each of these returns. To pass code for egress, one small, unobtrusive block was installed as an underwater step. No underwater lights were needed, because the overhead lighting provided enough to pass the requirements for the minimum number of lumens for down-



This original color-coded plumbing layout was given to Tim at DBR Plumbing.

lighting required by the pool code.

### Equipment Integration

The two bottom drain lines, two 3/4-inch air lines, two 2-inch skimmer lines and four 2-inch return lines were all plumbed to the filter area as separate pipes with no tees or hard 90-degree fittings anywhere in the runs. Three years later, I handed Tim from DBR

Plumbing a photograph of another project completed a few months earlier with the same filter layout requirements needed here. That was all he needed to stub up the piping in the positions necessary for Hector Mardueno of Stonewall Creek to install the equipment.

Because of the layout, all the equipment needed to be pressurized. Both bottom drain lines connect to the intake

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**The koi pond blends effortlessly into the home and other water features. A continuing theme of water from the upstairs entryway reflecting pond flows down the water wall, leading the eye to the koi pond as you cross the reflecting pool through the center of the home.**

of one LWS Static Suction Pre-filter (SSP) on the suction side of the pump, operating at 1/2 inch of mercury. The pump pulls water from both the SSP and the two skimmer lines and delivers it to one of my Low-Pressure Bioreactors (LPBR), which produces less than 1/4 pound of pressure on the return side, making the system very efficient. An Intelliflow variable-speed pump was used to make the final flow rate adjustable due to the piping dynamics.

One LWS 87-watt ultraviolet light is mounted on one of the return lines and buried vertically into the ground. The autofill is electronic and located in the filter area with a balance line and

a water line both going to the pond. The balance line is covered in the pond with one AquaStar 8-inch drain cover and a modified adaptor for the 2-inch line. The 3/4-inch water line is capped with a gray insert and perforated cover I machined myself.

The koi pond blends effortlessly into the home and other water features. A continuing theme of water from the upstairs entryway reflecting pond flows down the water wall, leading the eye to the koi pond as you cross the reflecting pool through the center of the home and toward the swimming pool. This creates a beautiful, seamless flow, proving this zombie project was worth the wait. ☞

### 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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When is an employee an independent contractor?

by **Mark E. Battersby**

**E**mployers have long preferred to treat workers as independent contractors, reaping payroll tax savings and avoiding any fringe benefits and other expenses associated with employees. By the same token, workers — including the owners of many pond and water feature businesses — could potentially lower their own tax bills by shifting from being an employee to independent contractor.

However, garden pond retailers, distributors, builders and manufacturers attempting to reduce costs by using independent contractors need to be sure that these workers really aren't employees. And, while the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) contains a special 20-percent deduction from the income of independent contractors operating pass-through businesses such as S-corporations, LLCs and partnerships, newly proposed rules could make it harder for moderate-income employees, espe-

cially employees of their own businesses.

### Pass-Through Income

The TCJA, as mentioned, included a new 20-percent deduction for pass-through income from S-corporations, LLCs and partnerships — but it's also available to independent contractors. Under the TCJA, many workers, as well as many business owners, are eyeing the lower tax bills that might result from shifting from being an employer to an independent contractor.

Obviously, this is not an easy decision. First, the 20-percent deduction from pass-through income generally occurs so long as taxable income is less than \$157,500 for an individual or \$315,000 for those filing jointly. What's more, switching to independent contractor status might mean the loss of valuable benefits, such as retirement contributions, health insurance, unemployment benefits

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and workers' compensation coverage.

It should also be kept in mind that Congress expressly denied the 20-percent deduction from pass-through income to high-income owners of specified service businesses: health, law, accounting, actuarial science, brokerage, financial services, performing arts, athletics and consultants. Even if a pond professional were not specifically disqualified by field, any other trade or business where the principal asset is the "reputation or skill" of its owners was also excluded.

Further restricting the 20-percent deduction for pass-through income, the IRS has said that if a worker was treated as an employee prior to the passage of the TCJA, then he or she is presumed to be an employee and cannot become an independent contractor for doing essentially the same work for the same employer.

Under recently proposed pass-through rules, most employees would be out of luck, and many high-income owners of service businesses would be getting an unexpected tax break. Owners of all pass-through busi-

nesses with income less than the limits are already permitted the 20-percent deduction. Thus, the new relief may benefit only very high-income owners.

### Misclassification Woes

The owners of small garden pond businesses who want to treat workers as independent contractors — and those pond professionals wishing to operate as independent contractors — need to be sure they aren't, in reality, employees. Federal and state government agencies are on the lookout for businesses that use independent contractors or freelancers to evade Social Security, Medicare, unemployment taxes, workers compensation and disability insurance.

Typically, an employer will claim a worker as an independent contractor, while the IRS classifies the worker as an employee. The stakes for employers are high, and if a worker is treated as an employee, the employer must pay its share of taxes based on the Federal Insurance Contribution Act

(FICA) and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA).

Conversely, if a worker qualifies as an independent contractor, the employer isn't responsible for those payroll taxes. Even more importantly, perhaps, the employer doesn't have to provide expensive fringe benefits like health insurance or matching 401(k) contributions for those individuals.

### What Constitutes 'Independent'?

Although there are no absolute rules for determining who is and who isn't an independent contractor, the IRS has published valuable guidelines. Generally, a worker doesn't qualify as an independent contractor if he or she performs services that are controlled by the employer.

Who, for example, determines where and when the worker is at work? How closely is the worker supervised? Who purchases tools and supplies? Can the worker do work for other people or businesses? Is the worker paid by the hour,

weekly or over another time period, or does the worker instead receive a flat fee?

The relationship itself is another factor. Are services performed by the individual a key aspect of the garden pond operation's regular business? How do the individual's assignments compare to those of the business's full-time staff?

Fortunately, the IRS looks at the totality of circumstances. In other words, if all the criteria point toward the worker being an independent contractor, the fact that the worker is paid by the hour won't necessarily turn this into an employer-employee relationship.

### Proof Positive

No less a body than the U.S. Supreme Court has said that there is no definition that solves all problems relating to the employer-employee relationship under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The Court has also said that the "determination of the relationship cannot be based on isolated factors or upon a single

characteristic, but depends upon the circumstances of the whole activity." In general, an employee, as distinguished from an independent contractor who is engaged in a business of his or her own, is one who "follows the usual path of an employee" and is dependent on the business that they serve.

The IRS formerly used a "20 Factor" test. Today, under pressure, the IRS has attempted to simplify and refine the test, consolidating the 20 factors into 11 main tests and organizing them into three main groups:

— **Behavioral.** Does the client or customer have the right to control what the worker does and how the worker does his or her job?

— **Financial.** Are the business aspects of the worker's job controlled by the payer? This includes such things as how payment is made, whether expenses are reimbursed and who provides tools and supplies.

— **Type of Relationship.** Are there written contracts or employee-type benefits like a pension plan, insurance, vacation pay, etc.? Will the relationship

continue, and is the work performed a key aspect of the client or customer?

Obviously, there is no magic number of factors that defines whether an individual is an independent contractor or employee. The key is to look at the entire relationship, consider the degree or extent of the right to direct and control and, finally, document each of the factors used to produce the proper label of worker or independent contractor.

If there is any doubt remaining after reviewing the three categories of evidence, Form SS-8, Determination of Worker Status for Purposes of Federal Employment Taxes and Income Tax Withholding, can be filed with the IRS by either the pond professional or the business utilizing his or her services. Unfortunately, the IRS's review of the facts and circumstances can take at least six months to reach a determination.

### Pass-Through vs. Independent

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dictated a business should operate as a pass-through entity because that avoided the dreaded double taxation problem of corporations (i.e., corporate profits are taxed at the corporate level and again when passed to shareholders as dividends). While the double taxation threat still exists after the TCJA, it has been toned down by the new 21-percent corporate tax rate.

Nothing in the TCJA discourages the time-honored strategy of operating as an S-corporation and paying modest salaries to shareholders and employees in order to minimize Social Security and Medicare taxes. In fact, the TCJA makes this strategy even more attractive for many pond business owners, because it maximizes the amount of pass-through income that is potentially eligible for the qualified business income deduction.

Unfortunately, as mentioned, the IRS's new pass-through income deduction rules make it more difficult for moderate-income employees to lower their taxes by becoming an independent contractor. Higher-income owners of service busi-

nesses, on the other hand, could shrink their tax bill under the new rules.

Although independent contractors are a longtime, proven way for employers to achieve workforce flexibility and save money, they are also a popular strategy that provides pond professionals with a great deal of flexibility and, in some cases, lower tax bills for those choosing independent contractor status for themselves. Those lower tax bills and the difficulty in determining who is and who isn't an independent contractor help explain the IRS's ongoing crackdown on worker misclassification.

### Fighting the Fight

The Government Accountability Office estimates that worker misclassification costs the federal government \$2.7 billion per year, while both the IRS and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) believe that up to 30 percent of employers are misclassifying workers.

A pond business can be randomly

audited, or federal or state officials could be tipped off to possible misclassification in other ways. If there is anything suspicious about the Form 1099s sent to independent contractors, the IRS is usually eager to investigate further. State officials often look at unemployment tax payments. If an independent contractor sues the business, the government might want to investigate.

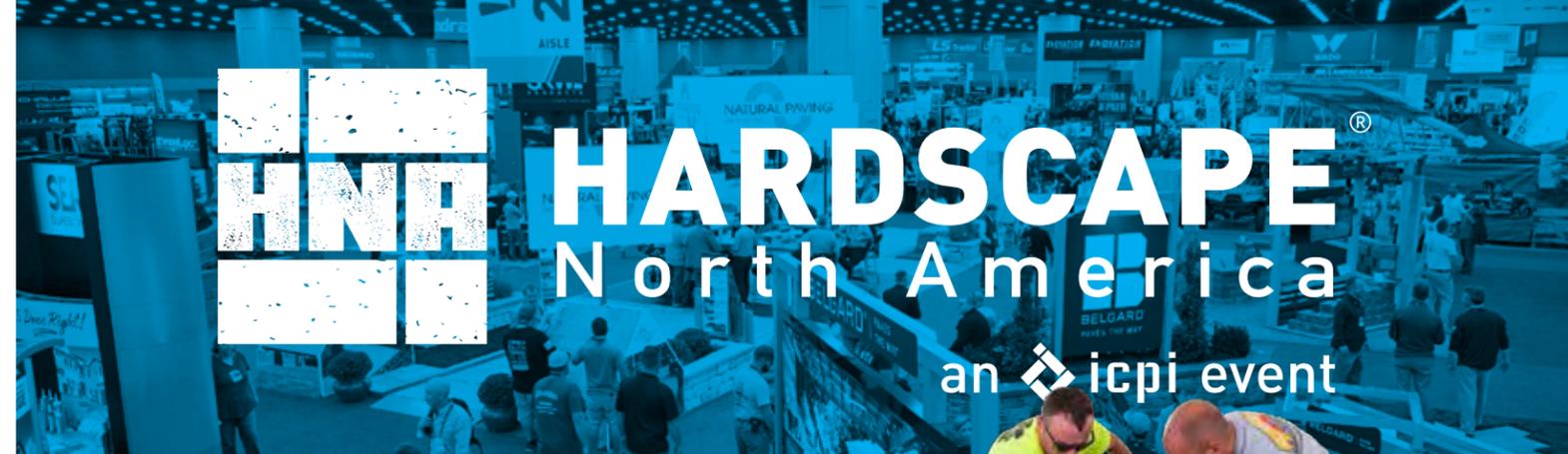
Just as every pond and water feature business should be very careful to distinguish between employees and independent contractors, so should every pond professional who chooses independent contractor status as a pass-through entity. Professional assistance may be required to ensure you and your workers are clearly considered independent contractors. 

*Twenty-five years of professional experience in the fields of taxes and finance enable Mark Battersby to write on unique and topical subjects. Although no reputable professional should ever render specific advice at arm's length, he does craft unbiased, interesting, informative and accurate articles.*



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Geoff Heanue of Heanue Well Drilling in Prosperity, South Carolina, recently saw firsthand the value of the product and shared his success of the value it brought to his business.

“Our three ponds were so murky and dirty that our fish were literally coming to the top of the water and gasping for air,” Heanue said. “The need for aeration was an absolute must. We purchased five 1-Horsepower Little Giant branded Aeration Systems and installed two pumps in each of our larger ponds and one in our smaller pond. The installation was easy, and the pumps are working great. We saw value almost immediately. Our fish aren’t dying, and the ponds look much cleaner. Being a Franklin Electric Key Dealer in the groundwater industry already, we have built a strong partnership that led to us hearing about the company’s pond management product line. From there, it was easy to choose Franklin.”

For more information about the Aeration System or other Little Giant-branded products, visit [www.lg-outdoor.com](http://www.lg-outdoor.com). You can also visit us on YouTube to see the product in action.



**EasyPro Purchases Becker Windmills of Ohio**

EasyPro Pond Products is growing again. Dave Ouwinga, President and Owner of EasyPro has announced the company’s purchase of Becker Windmills of Ohio. Becker pond-aerating windmills are known for their advanced product engineering, durability, efficiency and classic styling.

“When the Becker family approached me about purchasing their company, it just made sense,” Ouwinga said. “This is the perfect product to add to our lake and pond aeration manufacturing line. We’ve been a proud distributor of Becker Windmills for years, and they are simply the strongest, highest-quality windmills on the market. We’ve moved the manufacturing to our location in Michigan so we can fulfill all orders in a timely manner and deliver the same quality product that our customers have come to expect from us.”

Becker aerating windmills come in a variety of tower heights and use renewable wind energy to aerate, eliminating electrical costs and dependency. [www.easyprow.com](http://www.easyprow.com)

**Applied Biochemists Launches Aquashade Plus Dye, a Highly Concentrated, EPA-Registered Colorant for Lakes and Ponds**



Aquashade Plus dye prevents and kills underwater aquatic plants and algae. This new formulation is 2.4 times more concentrated than the original Aquashade dye and is highly effective at inhibiting photosynthesis under water.

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For more info, visit: [www.moleaer.com/products/clear](http://www.moleaer.com/products/clear).



**18th Annual Northern Midwest ZNA Koi Show**

The Gateway Koi and Pond Club will host the 18th Annual Northern Midwest ZNA Koi Show & Pond Expo from September 13-15, 2019. The event will be held at Timberwinds Nursery in Ellisville, Missouri, and is open to the public with free admission. Hours are Friday from 3-5 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There will be raffles, attendance prizes, koi judging and speakers on various topics of ponding and gardening Saturday, along with the judges’ talk and tour of the tanks on Sunday. Koi, goldfish and pond and garden-related vendors will be open all three days.

The show schedule and more information can be found at [www.nmzna.net](http://www.nmzna.net) and [www.gatewaykoiandpondclub.org](http://www.gatewaykoiandpondclub.org). Come enjoy the beautiful living jewels of Japan. It’s fun for the whole family!

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