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A large indoor pond display, likely at a trade show. The display features a rustic stone wall on the left with a window, a large tree trunk in the center, and a waterfall cascading over rocks on the right. The pond is surrounded by lush green plants and purple hydrangeas. The background shows the interior of a large exhibition hall with other displays and people.

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sales p. 24

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30 Pond Cleanup Crew LANGUAGE OF KOI
Even the best maintained ponds could use a little extra help every now and then. **Casey LeFever** will introduce you to a few aquatic allies that can help improve water clarity year-round without bothering your koi (or sending you a bill).

36 Naturally Inspired
A major component of designing naturalistic water features is the artistic element. Sometimes our muse is there, and other times, it feels impossible to meet the right aesthetic. **Tim Wood** & **Tim Anderson** share tips on conjuring your creative eye.

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In this issue's Best Pond Practices installment, **Kent Wallace** exposes you to the difficulties of designing and building naturalistic and formal ponds in extreme environments – and in this case, the desert. His tips on pond edge treatments will help you think outside the box when it comes to a pond's perimeter.

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Some see algae as a pond owner's worst nightmare, but as **Jamie Beyer** explains, in certain situations, this pea-green pest can play a vital role in balancing a pond's ecosystem.

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Upcoming Events

2019

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
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Bear Creek Mountain Resort
Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania
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October 16 - 18
GIE+Expo
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.gie-expo.com

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Publisher's Perspective

Life is Good!

Reports are coming in from pond builders all over the country — it sounds like business and life in the pond world has been really good this season! People have told me that with the economy on the upswing, they are able to pick and choose which jobs they want to take on, and



which ones they want to take a pass on. How about that?

I surely hope that you fall into this category. This news bodes quite well for our upcoming fourth annual Water Artisans of the Year contest, which, as many of you know by now, will showcase the most brilliant builds of the year on an independent platform. Keep an eye out for details on how to enter, and I think I speak for my colleagues here at POND Trade when I say we are on the edge of our seats in anticipation of

seeing your entries. I expect that we will get to see just how "good" life has been for you and your business in 2019!

In this issue, we tackle a few of today's hot topics. And speaking of hot, this summer's extreme heat has brought the subject of algae back into the headlines. You've probably heard all about the harmful effects of algae on aquatic life, our water-loving pets and the ecosystem in general. But according to Jamie Beyer, all algae are not the culprit. Turn over to pg. 14 for a deep dive on all things algae, and find out why it can be an integral part of a balanced ecosystem.

Another word that pops up quite a bit in this issue is "biofriendly." No question, when you're thinking about adding a "Pond Cleanup Crew" (pg. 30) or trying a new edge treatment for the perimeter of a pond (pg. 45), it's essential to make environmental considerations to preserve the environment for all the ecosystem's swimming (and non-swimming) inhabitants.

Finally, we have a couple of articles that focus on artistry and the creative eye. On pg. 36, Tim Wood and Tim Anderson provide some excellent tips on accentuating nature's focal points to enhance the viewing angles of a water feature. I also found Kelly Billing's Waterlily Timeline a most inspiring work of art that certainly must enhance the work life for the thousands of employees at the FDA's White Oak campus. The details begin on pg. 52.

Happy PONDerin'!



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Procumbens 'Nana' juniper softens boulder edges at the top of the pondless waterfall. It is a staple used in virtually all the company's water features.



Colorful plantings like coral drift roses highlight the landscape around the second stream in the pondless waterfall.

Come and Play in My Yard!

A high-end waterscape showroom just steps from home



Koi shimmer under the LED lights, which also highlight a Japanese maple with coral bark next to the small pond.

by Brian Hoagland,
Hoaglandscape Inc.

There's no better way to sell water features than to show a potential client your very own work. I use my home as my showroom in Belmont, North Carolina.

There are two pondless waterfall streams in the front yard along with a spillway bowl set. The landscaping, complete with six Japanese maples of different varieties and dozens of shrubs and stunning coral drift roses, provides a wonderful introduction to the property, which spans six-tenths of an acre.

If I were to charge a client for everything I have in the front yard, the bill would be more than \$100,000. The backyard, with pond, fountains, outdoor lighting and four more Japanese maples, would run some \$150,000.



Spillway bowls (left) form a welcoming entrance to the showroom. The upper bowl serves as a wetland filter and utilizes a taro elephant ear. Scores of different ferns, hostas and hydrangeas (top) make up the wooded-themed landscape at the rear of the property.

Appraisers always tell me I'll never get my money back. But I do — through my business! Besides, I didn't do it for real estate value. I did it for my own enjoyment and relaxation.

Humble Beginnings

When I purchased the property, I built a ranch-style house. The lot had a few trees, standard builder shrubs and lots of grass. I maintained the yard and added to the landscape, planting trees, spreading mulch to create beds and adding flowers and decorative borders.

I formed Hoaglandscape in 2002 as a landscaping company. I began building water features in 2007 after attending a hands-on build class through our distributor, Smith, Turf and Irrigation. I started off building a small, 8-by-12-foot pond with an 8-foot stream in my backyard.

It was one of the best days of my life. I had always dreamed of building ponds, but never did I think we would actually do so. I remember sitting on the top of my deck steps and peering down at my modest pond with tears welling in my eyes.

Through the encouragement of David Blocksom of Pondscapes of Charlotte, I eventually earned my Certified Aquascape Contractor (CAC) designation, and the

business on the aquatic side slowly began to grow.

A Career Journey

Landscaping talent runs in my family. One grandfather was an English gardener before moving to the United States; the other was a prized rosarian in Florida. My parents always took pride in their property, with Dad's immaculate lawn and Mom's wildflower garden. My older brother supervised a golf course grounds crew, installing decorative flowerbeds and creating seasonal displays. As far as my other brother and I were concerned, we enjoyed working in our yards.

In 2002, I made the decision to start my own career in landscaping. It was tough at first, but it would eventually pay off. When we started building water features, the business quickly began to grow, as did my passion for living and sharing the pond lifestyle.

At first, we built about five water features a year, but through better sales techniques and rising market demand, we started doing around 20 ponds and pondless waterfalls per year. I realized I needed a showroom to highlight our work, so I looked into some rental properties along busy roads in our area. Unfortunately, I just couldn't justify the rent.

Luck of the Irish

I'd heard about this wild Irishman, Gerard Touhey, and how he often insisted that his potential clients come and see his very own work at his house. I thought this was a great idea! So in 2008, the crew and I got busy building a 40-foot pondless waterfall in my front yard.

I soon realized we had made the same mistakes that a lot of newbies make. The stream was too narrow. The boulders were too small — and there were too many. The waterfalls lacked proper character boulders.

Reconstruction

We ripped out the new pondless waterfall the following winter during the off-season. We brought in a mini-excavator and used bigger, dramatic boulders. We put more curve in the stream. Japanese maples were added for specimen plantings, and procumbens 'Nana' junipers — a staple in all our builds to this day — softened the edges of the stream.

But with that success came the realization that I had other shortcomings with my pond. After two more rebuilds, I was eventually satisfied.

Now that I had a pondless waterfall and pond in my yard, I started to urge prospects to come and take a look. I quickly realized that it was easier to sell water



Hoaglandscape was the first Certified Aquascape Contractor in the country to install Aquascape's scalloped fountain urns. Small signs (inset) indicate each feature's price and vital information at the showroom.



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A variegated variety (top) is one of six Japanese maples along Hoaglandscapes's double pondless waterfall. It took three tries, but I was finally satisfied with this small pond (center), complete with 8-foot stream. Perennial Solomon's Seal and rhododendron (bottom) are among the plants that give the pond a natural wooded setting.



features and landscaping by doing this. In fact, one gentleman who signed a \$23,000 contract remarked that our grounds looked better than the famous Stowe Botanical Gardens in Belmont!

An Ongoing Upgrade

Still, we weren't done. I kept adding plants to the backyard. Trees that I had planted as saplings 25 years before were now more than 50 feet tall, providing shade over most of the backyard. In the fall, my grass was nothing but red clay because it struggled with all the shade. I determined that the days of mowing the lawn for an hour were numbered. We had made 75 percent of my backyard a natural area.

And, of course, I wanted another water feature. This time I chose a new set of three scalloped fountain urns that were being offered to Aquascape CACs. I became the first contractor in the United States to install them.

We put in a meandering, epoxied, pea-gravel pathway in the backyard that circles the fountains. It allows guests to easily see and inspect hundreds of ferns and dozens of hostas, encore azaleas and hydrangeas, which highlight the wooded theme.

Still, I wanted more. In February

2019, we installed a 45-foot pondless waterfall that became a twin to the one out front. We used our biggest boulders yet, and better still, all the turf in my front yard was now gone! We also added a spillway bowl set with some unique plantings surrounding it, including a weeping redbud and windmill palm.

The showroom was virtually complete, but it required one bit of marketing. When selling, so many contractors fail to address the elephant in the room — the price! To directly address this, I installed small, 6-by-6-inch signs by each water feature that showed the price and critical information on each project — like the amount of stone and the size of the pumps.

It worked like a charm. One of my first visitors loved my pond and wanted one just like it. When he saw the \$13,995 price tag, he realized that it was too much for him. Displaying the price sets realistic expectations for potential clients, helping them see the possibilities and determine what's right for them. If they aren't ready yet, it saves everyone both time and hassle.


So, am I done? No. That one patch of grass in the backyard sure would make a nice area for a recreational swim pond... ☞

About the Author



Brian Hoagland, founder of Hoaglandscapes Inc., earned a public relations degree from Appalachian State University in 1985. He and his wife, Christie, often travel to see the school's football team. In 2012, Hoagland was awarded an Aquascape "Top Frog" Award for his business practices. He loves working and networking with his peers on projects. While

at home, he can usually be found waterside with his wife and two dogs "living the pond life."



Yellow waterlily has grown well in this Midwest pond, providing shade for shallow areas where moss can grow.

| **Algae** Balance |

ALGAE

Blessing or a Curse?

by **Jamie Beyer,**
Midwest Landscapes

Anyone who has been involved with water gardens for even a short period of time understands how algae can be a curse. When you think about what to do with string algae, such as filamentous algae and blanket weed, or pea-green soup algae, which is the same as planktonic and single-celled algae, it can create nightmares. We all have battled these algae.

But how can algae be a blessing? This is very much the case for some types of algae, which can be critically important for the ecosystem. It is my opinion that the average person should appreciate algae and not necessarily want to scrub it off or kill all of it in their pond's ecosystem.

The number of algal species is estimated at up to 10 million, with most of them very small, like microalgae. Because of so many species, there are always exceptions to controlling some types. It is all about control — not about killing it.

I have simplified the process of explaining algae by arranging the common types into three groups. (There are other very unusual categories of algae, but I will not address those in this article.) The three groups are free-floating, single-celled (planktonic) algae, string algae and surface (biofilm) algae. All three types of these algae need a lot of sunlight and warmth to prosper.

Planktonic Algae

This free-floating form of single-celled algae can show up early in a newly established water

garden. Within a few days to a couple of weeks after installation, it may turn into a pea-green soup. This alga is one that tells you that the ecosystem is out of balance. The bacteria that become established in an ecosystem are the major component that controls the single-celled algae. In a newly established water garden, an ecosystem is nonexistent — bacteria are in low numbers, and the organics present in the water feed these algae and help them thrive. Organics include anything that was once alive and is now dead, like fish waste, decaying leaves and uneaten fish food. Bacteria degrade these organics into other components that pea-green soup algae can no longer use for growth.

There is a balanced ratio of organic material to bacteria in a mature ecosystem. When organics get very high in relation to the number of bacteria, pea-green soup algae will grow. The extent to which this type of algae will grow depends on the ecosystem's component of bacteria. These algae may not even be detectable, but they can grow to levels where you can only see about an inch deep into the water.

These algae are everywhere, and they are always present in an ecosystem. Adding bacteria to ponds is always a good idea to degrade the organics. In most situations, this will be enough to control the pea-green soup algae. You can also add UV clarifiers. When these single-celled algae are exposed to UV light, they die, clump up and settle out.

If the water is gin-clear, you know you have good control over single-celled algae. If the water is somewhat cloudy, you may have an issue. Just



This type of moss (blanket weed or filamentous algae) is typical of Midwest earthen basin ponds. It likes full sunlight and shallow water. If waterlilies were present, the shade would diminish the chances of it growing.

put some of the pond water in a clear glass jar. Let it sit for several hours or overnight. If it clears with a light sediment layer on the bottom of the jar, you have a sediment issue — not a single-celled algae issue. But if the water has a cloudy, greenish look to it when held up to the light, you probably have an algae-related issue. Sediment can confuse a lot of people into thinking they have an algae problem, when in fact they do not.

String Algae

This type of algae is also known as blanket weed or filamentous algae. It can be a huge problem, not only for us water gardeners but also for anyone who has a body of water with the right nutrients for string algae to prosper. Farm pond and lake owners know this stuff as moss. There are a lot of different kinds of moss, but the most common type looks stringy and contains bubbles entrained in the mats of moss.

Normally, but not always, string algae is attached to something. In shallow areas of ponds with a mud or sediment bottom, string algae will grow on the

oxygen will entrain in the string algae. As these bubbles grow, the moss on the bottom is lifted to the surface and forms mats of moss. The string algae cannot



These rocks show a nice biofilm layer (the patina of a pond) where the surface algae provide a home to the ecosystem's invertebrates.

bottom, where sunlight can easily penetrate. Deeper parts of the pond will not get enough light for these algae to grow. As the sunlight penetrates the water on a warm day, air bubbles containing mostly

maintain a hold on the sediment due to their buoyancy, and they easily become huge mats of floating moss. This explains why on hot, sunny days, many farm ponds will have a ring of floating moss



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Dyeing the water a dark color shades the water and bottom from getting enough sunlight to grow filamentous algae. The black dye provides a beautiful contrast to the green of the waterlily leaves.

around their perimeters. No question, the phosphorus that is so prevalent in fertilizers and animal waste contributes to the growth of these algae.

You may not realize it, but you may have a natural remedy that can control string algae. A client once called me about

String algae takes on different forms, depending on the water temperature and nutrients in the environment. It can become rather soft and not as stringy in the winter.

a problem with what he called a “water-lily invasion.” The variety of waterlily was Nuphar, or yellow waterlily, a native to the Midwest. His two side-by-side ponds were ringed with green leaves and yellow buttercup flowers. He wanted to kill the waterlilies, since it was tough fishing through the lily pads. I recommended that he not kill all of it, because without this plant, he would still have the moss problem thanks to the shading of the leaves. I suggested that he kill off only the area around his dock where his grandchildren liked to fish.

What about the string algae in water gardens? They can become a huge problem in shallower areas, just like in the farm ponds. However, after they attach, they stay there, growing from the bottom of the pond to the top. If there is a lot of sediment, they will float like they might in a farm pond, but if among the plants, the algae will attach themselves to the leaves. They love to grow on rocks and in streams that have a lot of light. These are normally shallow areas where sunlight can easily penetrate the water.

String algae take on different forms, depending on the water temperature and nutrients in the environment. They can become rather soft and not as stringy in the winter. New ponds generally do not see a lot of string algae during the first two years, but they almost always show up eventually. It can show up quickly if any plants,

stone or other materials that you have sourced from elsewhere may have been exposed to them. To prosper, these algae need the phosphorus that is ever-present in our water and soil. Simple windblown soil can contribute to the phosphorus level. A lot of organic material has phosphorus in it, and this can also contribute to the growth of string algae.

Controlling string algae can be done by a variety of methods, most of which have significant drawbacks. You can simply dye the water so that sunlight cannot penetrate the water. I prefer black, but regardless of what you choose, remember to make the water dark enough so that you cannot see your hand under a few inches of water. You will need to add dye several times during the year, since UV light degrades the dye over time. Dyeing does not control string algae in streams, as they are shallow. Some people want to see their fish in the deeper water and prefer a clear-water situation; obviously, dye will not work for them. Ecofriendly dyes are now available that are safe for pets and do not stain most rocks, depending

If dye isn’t your preferred solution, try adding salt to the water. I like to add up to 3 pounds of pure salt for every 100 gallons of water.

on the stone and strength of the dye. When dye does stain a little, it dissipates quickly with UV light. From my experience, I would not worry about staining. For plant geeks, the black-dyed water makes a wonderful contrast to the green leaves along the surface.

If dye isn’t your preferred solution, try adding salt to the water. I like to add up to 3 pounds of pure salt for every 100 gallons of water. You can use water-softener salt, but only

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Now you know why they call it string algae! It's in the same group as filamentous algae or blanket weed. The algae attach to rocks and plants in shallow water.

without additives. Pure salt is what you're after. Add in increments of 1 pound per 100 gallons over the course of a week. At this level, the fish will love it, but plants will not. Most submerged and floating plants will die. Waterlilies will hang on, but they will not like it. Remember that evaporation concentrates the salt. Anytime you lose water from the pond due to a leak or a huge rain event that overflows the pond, you may need to add more salt. Remember, salt is also harmful for your terrestrial plants, so when you pump out the water during a cleanout, for example, do not pump it into the same spot in the landscape on a regular basis. As an added note, most of the salt will need to be removed before winter. Salt lowers the freezing temperature of the water. A pond can become supercooled, which will endanger your fish.

Using barley straw can control some string algae, but it depends on the species of algae. Place loose straw in a mesh bag and add it to the water as soon as ice is out, or as the water warms after winter. Use one pound of straw per about 75 square feet of pond surface area. Locate the bag under a waterfall,

in a stream or at any location where there is heavy aeration. It is the decomposition of the barley straw that inhibits the growth of string algae. The placement locations should be in high-oxygen areas, where decomposition will occur easily. Repeat this as soon as you see that the straw is decomposed. This technique is very ecofriendly and will work in a lot of situations.

There are some commercial products available that work, but they can be expensive. One that I have used a lot and recommend is Pond Balance. Use it according to the directions. It's very ecofriendly and, like barley straw, it inhibits the growth of string algae. It will not kill off a lot of growth — at least in my experience. So, use it early in the season to get a jump on it.

Surface Algae

I like to call surface algae "patina algae" — this is the fun algae. It is vitally important to the ecosystem and should be preserved if at all possible. This is where scrubbing it or power washing it off would not be good. Besides, this is a lot of work and expense. Many of my clients rave about how wonderful the rocks look with the

patina power washed off. To me, it looks unnatural to see rocks without a biofilm on them. This includes the surface algae. We have become habituated to expect perfection when it comes to the look of something. But if you take the time to get up close to the patina and inspect it, you will come to see the beauty of what is in it. Specifically, you will see the surface algae providing homes for a myriad of invertebrates. The more species of surface algae, the more kinds of invertebrates they will provide homes for.

It takes years to build up the varieties of surface algae that make up the basis of the patina of a pond. The length of time needed for this maturation process depends on water temperature and exposure to other bodies of water that could potentially inoculate a water garden. I am convinced that three to four years is the average length of time for a biofilm to come close to maturity here in the Midwest. This period, I am assuming, is shorter in warmer climates. I also have seen instances where a pond with a mature patina layer does not have string algae growth in it. The surface algae have occupied the space, so any string algae

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Add pond water to a clear glass and let it sit for a few hours. This will tell you if the cloudiness of the water is due to pea-green soup algae or simply sediment. In this case, the sediment has settled at the bottom.

have a more difficult time establishing in that space. String algae will still grow in the stream anyway over the winter after killing the biofilm.

Surface algae are the blessing that we must come to appreciate. If we did not have algae and their associated invertebrates, our natural and man-made bodies

of water — water gardens included — would become cesspools. Even the cursed kinds of algae provide a huge amount of natural filtration. It is only when things are out of balance that these groups become a problem. Aeration can be added to make up for the lack of algae if there is a huge fish load or a lot of organics in the system.

Using some kinds of algae killers will not only kill planktonic and string algae, but they also will kill the surface algae. The algae killers that have copper in them are extremely lethal for invertebrates, but they can also kill fish in certain concentrations. This toxicity also applies to other heavy metals. It's true that fish can withstand a certain level of heavy metals, just as we humans can, but as they build up in a system, they become toxic. These should be used only as a last resort.

So, are algae a blessing or a curse? To most inexperienced water gardeners, a curse seems to be the obvious answer. However, if I may speak for those of us who have had the chance to think about the causes of algae problems and the solutions, I'm

betting now you're thinking that algae is a blessing. At least I hope so! ☺

About the Author

Water gardening has been a passion of **Jamie Beyer's** for more than 50 years, and he has worked on more than 1,000 ponds. He owns several very large ponds with many different kinds of water plants and fish. Jamie has a master's degree in fish and wildlife biology and is a Lifetime Master Gardener. He is the founder and former president of the Central Iowa Water Garden Association. He has a broad background in fisheries, the dynamics of water, horticulture and aquatic and wildlife ecology.



He currently owns Midwest Waterscapes, a consulting and installation business, where he specializes in water gardens, fountains and ponds.



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Bring it HOME

Home shows continue to create value & generate sales

by **Dean Pipito,**
Aquatica

As a veteran of creating successful, award-winning displays for more than 20 years, I get asked a lot of questions. How do we come up with our inspirational scenes? Where do our crazy ideas come from? What is the real value of home shows in the water garden industry?

There certainly isn't an exact science to it, but perhaps I can help you appreciate the value of home shows and use them to your advantage. In fact, I may be one of the last true believers in the value of home shows.

Key Strategies

Who is your target audience? When planning and creating a home show display, you need to consider the audience that you are going after. Know your buyer! Know your demographic. Know your ideal clientele and consider how you can attract them with a knockout display. If you discover that a particular show does not meet your audience requirements, perhaps that show is not for you.

A few years ago, I thought that our local "sports show" was going to be a slam-dunk. My crew set up a killer Northwoods landscape display with crashing waterfalls and pond. I even partnered with a local builder to construct an on-site log cabin. We were all set — or so I thought. This particular show was one of the most highly attended shows in our market, attracting tons of people who love the outdoors. What could go wrong? I didn't realize at the time that this "sports show" was a more family-oriented forum



This 1950s beach scene with underwater patio is completed by bikinis hanging from trees!



Our picnic on the beach (top left) was enhanced by the authentic 1960s runabout boat, pier and 1955 Mercury. Our canoe waterfall (top right) overlooked the display pond. We dubbed a moonshine run gone wrong (middle) "Whiskey Waterfalls." Ducks fly over the pond scene (bottom left) at Trappers Lodge (bottom right).

with events for parents and kids. People (and their kids) loved the booth, but we didn't talk to any serious buyers at a show with more than 30,000 attendees. I can't state it enough: Know your audience!

What is your theme? What story are you telling? This is your hook. I'll tell you right now — don't do a home show display if you are not going to produce a design that will knock people's socks off. You will get out of it what you put into it. Be sure to tell a story with your display, just as Norman Rockwell did when he painted a picture and scene. Over the years, we have created a 1950s beach party, a moonshine run gone wrong, a wildlife taxidermy display complete with flying ducks and authentic hunting lodge, a backyard lounging beach, a Northwoods camping trip, life-sized frog sculptures playing the piano and trumpets, a full-sized garden railroad city ... and so on.

Next, be sure to come up with a realistic monetary goal for your display. Set a sales target, and figure out how much you need to sell to break even. Ask yourself questions like, how many people typically attend the show? What is the demographic? Is it primarily parents looking to pass some time and entertain their kids, or will there be serious buyers with the sole purpose of hiring a contractor?

Take a Chance

When designing a booth, there comes a time when you just have to say, "Let's take a chance." One of the things Aquatica is known for is our crazy-cool displays. Around 12 years ago, we constructed a display with bubbling saxophones, trombones and trumpets, floating moss islands, sculptures and foggers. It was incredible and memorable. I advertised it as the "Aquatica Sound Garden." I knew at the time I created it that it was probably not sellable, but the threefold goal of the display was to make people remember us, to add to our brand image and to make people smile.

Sometimes you have to take a chance and put yourself out there; it just might pay off. Over the past 20 years, Aquatica has won 16 of the prestigious People's Choice Awards in the largest garden and landscape

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show in Wisconsin, which we have used to create good public relations for our company. Remember, it's not always about the leads — it's about reminding people about your company's talents and who you are. Create a display people will remember. Some recent home show attendees have told us that the main reason they come to the shows is to see what amazing displays we have created. They literally list off each year and their favorite displays like it's a soundtrack playing on repeat in their mind!

Things to Remember

What is your return on investment? Are you in this for the long game or short gain? If you want to become a part of the fabric of a community, you have to do a particular home show many, many times and become a name that is automatically associated with that show. You may not see an immediate return, but I assure you, if there are quality attendees at the show year after year, you will start to create a long-term investment in your brand and image.

Then there are the other details, like the display size, budget, manpower, length of show, setup and takedown schedule, staffing, brochures and point of purchase. It is fine if you decide to create a small display; however, make sure that your display matches your company image. Don't expect to be treated as the authority in your industry with a fold-up table and a brochure. Make a statement or don't do it at all. Remember, home shows are what you put into it.

Success Stories

When you do shows regularly, the home show becomes the industry's social event of the year, almost like a family reunion of sorts. Years ago, we were working a show, and there was a banking firm across the aisle from us. I noticed the guy in the booth curiously watching us throughout the weekend as we engaged with the public. After a couple of days, he approached me in the booth and said, "Wow, you have a lot of family at this show!"

"Family?" I asked, knowing that none of my family had shown up that weekend.

"Well, who were all those people you were hugging?"

I laughed. "Those are our clients!" I exclaimed. He was shocked. You can't buy that kind of interaction — you create it!

Years ago, we had a line at least 10 people deep in the aisle with people waiting to talk to us and ask about a new trend in landscaping. It was the new, shiny penny in the landscape industry that many of



A life-sized frog plays a waterfall piano in the pond with bubbling trumpets (circa 2013).



The original Aquatica Sound Garden (2007)

you may remember — ponds and waterfalls! We would come out of shows with page after page after page of quality leads and prospects. People would literally give us a deposit on-site without even having a contract or design. What crazy times! By the end of the show, my voice would be so hoarse that I could not talk!

Times have definitely changed. Today, people are much more reserved and guarded. We rarely get committed buyers on the spot, and leads on paper have slowed. While this may discourage even the

seasoned home show vendor, it's OK — just remember the long game.

Looking Ahead

I believe that, at least in the Midwest, there remains a decent value in home show displays and advertising if you approach it correctly and have the right vision and

As a business owner, I have to constantly change with the times, and this is no different. I guess I'm still betting on the long game and not just the immediate leads. This is a more passive approach, but it has led to a powerful pipeline of phone calls, referrals, and leads throughout the seasons. Aquatica has created a highly respected brand in Wisconsin, and home shows are a great way to stay in front of the community, past clients, new clients and our contractor network. We keep building the brand, tuning our image and cultivating our relationships.

That's why I believe these shows are still worth it. We may never go back to the home show "glory days," but the value of an awesome display is almost immeasurable. The media alone at the last show we did was priceless: three TV interviews on different channels, four radio spots on different stations, two features in

the largest newspaper in Wisconsin and tons of social media buzz and buildup. We then take that and turn it into portfolio-worthy pictures, videos and memories with our crew and clients. Who could ask for more?

So, yes, I would say that home shows still have their place in a social media-driven world. Combine the online buzz with a home show event and create a winning combination. In the off-season, a home show may be your answer. I know my opinion on home shows is not the most popular, but you can't look at home shows with tunnel vision.

Remember all the ways a show can benefit your company beyond the reach of social media. Combine your marketing efforts into one successful pipeline of leads, image creation and branding that will make your company the one people remember most in your area.

Good luck! ☺

About the Author

Dean Pipito, owner of Aquatica and previous Water Artisans of the Year winner, has been in the water garden and landscape industry for the past 30 years. Dean began his love for working with water as a kid, growing up on rivers and creeks. He began his work life with top professional landscape companies in Wisconsin before deciding to create Aquatica, which has become one of the largest waterscape firms in the country. Dean has been featured on TV shows, in newspapers and magazines and as a regular guest on many radio programs. He has been highly involved in the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association in many roles, including president, vice president and treasurer. He currently serves on the board of the Wildlife in Need Center, a release and rehabilitation center for injured wildlife in Wisconsin. Dean is a Master CAC.





Trapdoor snails can help to filter water and clean the sides of ponds and tanks.

The Pond Cleanup Crew

Lean on these **aquatic allies** for pond cleanup

by Casey LeFever,
Blue Ridge Koi

Pond and koi keeping often can require a lot of time and labor. It is a labor of love for many koi fans, but a little help from time to time is greatly appreciated. Sometimes, this assistance comes from the most unlikely of sources. Believe it or not, even *Aeromonas* has its own helpful qualities.

Beyond that, there are a number of little helpers that koi keepers can lean on, even in a small way, to help swing the balance of clear water in favor of their "living jewels." These pond helpers may be small, but they can be quite helpful in keeping in check some of the stuff that can drive a koi enthusiast crazy.

Snails

Snails, some of the more omnipresent helpers, can end up in your pond without you even knowing it. Snails of all kinds can find their way into your koi pond by hitchhiking a ride on the back of another animal or even a plant. Snails can be introduced into a pond's ecosystem by visitors like turtles or an aquatic plant that is brought in. Some snails will simply migrate to your pond from another area.

Snails are algae eaters. They are like

small recycling plants. They will also feed on organic debris like uneaten fish food, leaves or other detritus that falls to the bottom of the pond. Some even claim that by stirring



up sediment, they will release some nitrogen. Although they do have a role in helping to keep the water clear, they will not eat the blue-green algae that are the real source of irritation to koi keepers, not to mention a danger to the koi.

There are numerous species of snails that are indigenous to different regions. Some are more beneficial than others. Some that rapidly produce offspring can become a nuisance. Many types of snails are hermaphrodites, meaning they can reproduce without mating. It can make for a very crowded pond.

Others may attack pond plants or prefer the beneficial algae that helps to keep the water parameters in check, while skipping the type that can lead to lowered oxygen

levels or green water-causing planktonic algae blooms that limit visibility in a pond.

The most regularly recommended pond snail for the job is the Japanese Trapdoor snail, or *Viviparus malleatus*. Also known as the Chinese Mystery snail, they can get to be 2 to 3 inches when fully grown. They are hardy enough to overwinter in more extreme climates. These critters can handle pH fluctuations anywhere from 6.5 to 8. And what is more, they are not hermaphroditic. They are live-bearing snails and only breed twice a year. Whereas some snail species will view your pond plants as a tasty treat, Japanese Trapdoor snails do not eat plants and instead stick to the nasty stuff that you want out of your pond.

How many will I need to see a difference? The Pond Guy recommends a concentration of 10 snails per 50 square feet, and Dragonfly Aquatics says that one snail for every 20 gallons is the magic number to help clean your pond.

One thing to remember — if you do have snails, do not use algacides. They will kill off your snail population. Another thing to consider is where you are getting your snails from. Wild snails can, and often will harbor parasites that they will then introduce into your pond. It isn't a great idea to go snail-ing and then drop them into your pond. You have no idea where they've been! Get to know



Some hobbyists enjoy watching bullfrog tadpoles progress through their life stages, shedding their tails and growing legs.



Channel catfish, unlike some other species of catfish, are unlikely to eat koi and goldfish.



Actually not a shark at all, *Myxocyprinus asiaticus* can add a peaceful presence to your pond.



A bullfrog tadpole shows its hind legs.



An active, schooling fish, Golden Orfe can add an energetic presence to ponds and tanks.

the species that will best suit your purposes. Some snails can look pretty, but they can become pretty annoying when they multiply rapidly and start to favor your plants over the detritus and algae that you need them to eat.

If your pond is relatively algae free, one way to dissuade your snails from tucking into your plants is to offer them a leafy alternative, like a lettuce leaf tethered to the bottom of the pond.

Tadpoles

Here's another little algae-munching helper. Once they have siphoned off the protein from their egg yolk, they will look for another source of food — and the most convenient food is often algae. As a bonus, tadpoles will eat mosquito larvae and help to cull the massive population of this irritating insect.

Tadpoles will eventually become frogs or toads, but many of these frogs will move on once they have shed their tail and grown into their appendages, leaving your pond ready for its next batch of tadpoles. Bullfrogs have been known to eat small koi, so get rid of bullfrogs, just to be safe. But that goes both ways, too. As omnivores, koi will put anything in their mouths that will fit, so they will eat (or, at least, attempt to eat) a small-enough tadpole.

Tadpoles do create an incredible amount of waste — up to five times more than some fish. It is recommended to keep the larger varieties of tadpoles out of small bodies of water like fish bowls or smaller aquariums. They will also eat softer aquatic plants, so be aware of their dietary requirements if you do decide to add tadpoles, or if you see frogs or toads near your pond. There are some varieties of toad tadpoles that produce toxins that can be lethal to koi, but this is extremely rare, as the foul taste usually causes the koi to spit them back out.

If you become concerned that you will have a plague of frogs once the tadpoles grow to maturity, you shouldn't be. Bullfrogs will thin out their own population through predation. Leopard frogs will leave to seek a new home. Toads will move out to drier areas, as they become land-based, terrestrial creatures upon maturity.

Nature has numerous checks and balances and will generally keep frog and toad populations to a minimum. As a bonus, the fully-grown versions of the tadpoles do like to thin out those insects that can be annoying while you watch your koi in the warmer months.

Hi Fin Banded Sharks

Another fantastic algae-eating pond

helper is the Chinese Hi Fin banded shark, or *Myxocyprinus asiaticus*. As well as being an extremely adaptable fish, the Hi Fin sharks can survive lower pond water temperatures, too, which is good news for pond keepers in those cooler climates with lower winter temperatures. Of course, they prefer the 60-to-80-degree range, but they can withstand temperatures as low as 55 degrees through dormancy. If water temperatures are lower than this, they can start to get stressed.

This mild-mannered, peaceable Chinese sucker fish from the family Catostomidae is compatible to all of your other swimming pond denizens, too. The Hi Fin banded shark prefers to school, so adding two or three to a pond helps them to acclimate to the environment and thrive.

This Yangtze River native species will eat all manners of algae, including green-hair algae, filamentous algae and black brush algae. They will also feast on worms, insects and crustaceans. Chopped-up zucchini sticks are a nice treat, as are seaweed sheets.

Given the right environment and enough space to grow, banded sharks can reach over 3 feet in length and live for longer than 20 years. They grow slowly, so don't expect them to reach their full length in a short period of time. And because they are algae eaters, they won't compete with your koi too much for food.

Channel Catfish

The channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) is the most populous and popular species of catfish in the United States. They have a forked caudal fin with a curved anal fin, are olive brown to slate in color (sometimes with dark spots on the side), and can grow to be more than 30 pounds. Although they prefer warmer water (60 to 70 degrees), they can handle chillier water, too.

It is true that they are omnivorous, scavenging bottom feeders, so they will munch on pretty much anything that will fit in their mouths. This includes algae, larvae, insects, frogs, invertebrates, koi fry growth and any leftover food and waste that sinks to the bottom.

As a pond mate to your koi, they don't pose a direct threat to your koi. However, as there is usually a proviso for something that will eat almost anything, a large, hungry catfish will look to supplement its diet where it can. So, there are stories of catfish helping to curate the size of a koi fish population, so to speak. Some catfish, like the blue catfish, can grow to be in excess of 100 pounds. In a small pond, that's a lot of fish to contend with, especially when they stir up the bottom and contribute to turbidity.

Something else to consider is that the larger they get, the more they will need

to eat — and the more competition your koi will likely face when their other food sources are scarce. But as many stories as there are about aggressive catfish, there are even more about channel catfish, koi and even goldfish coexisting in harmony.

If you are considering introducing a catfish to your koi pond, don't drop in one from a dubious source. There are outlets that can provide catfish that don't run the risk of introducing some bacteria or a parasite that hitched a ride from the local stream.

Golden Orfe

Leuciscus idus were the koi in ponds before koi became popular. They prefer and thrive in very much the same water parameters as koi. They can weather cold and heat and like their pH between 7 and 8. Like koi, they can grow to be more than 2 feet long.

They derive their name from the color they reach in maturity, which can range from an orange to a must lustrous golden sheen.

Other than looking tremendous when they school together, they don't really bring much to the pond party. They do like to catch insects like mosquito larvae, so there is that benefit if you aren't a big fan of bugs. This torpedo-shaped fish does play well with both koi and goldfish. Like koi, they will, on occasion, eat smaller fish. Orfe can live upward of

30 years when given the right conditions and some other orfe to share their time with.

As you can see, you can enlist the aid of some aquatic allies to help battle algae and assist with the upkeep and overall water quality in your koi pond. Of course, some might be a little better suited to your particular patch of pond life. A little research or reaching out to your local koi society will help inform you which might be your better choice. But most importantly, these are a lot more ecofriendly and attractive than algae-cides — and you don't have to keep it clean alone! 🐡

About the Author

Casey LeFever is co-owner of NextDayKoi.com and part of the third-generation future ownership of Blue Ridge Koi and Goldfish, the largest and longest-running koi farm in the United States. He was brought home from the hospital and weighed in a feeder goldfish bucket at just a few days old, and he has been around fish ever since.





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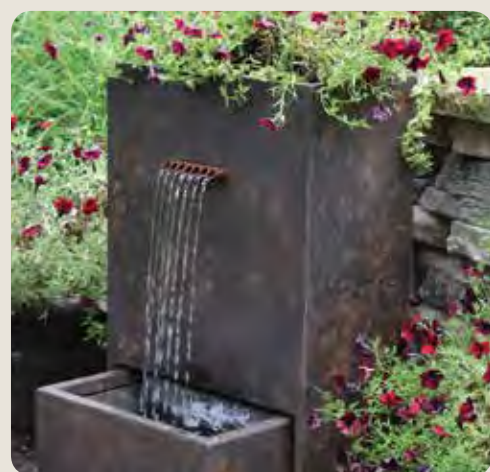


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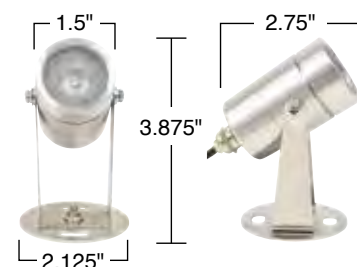
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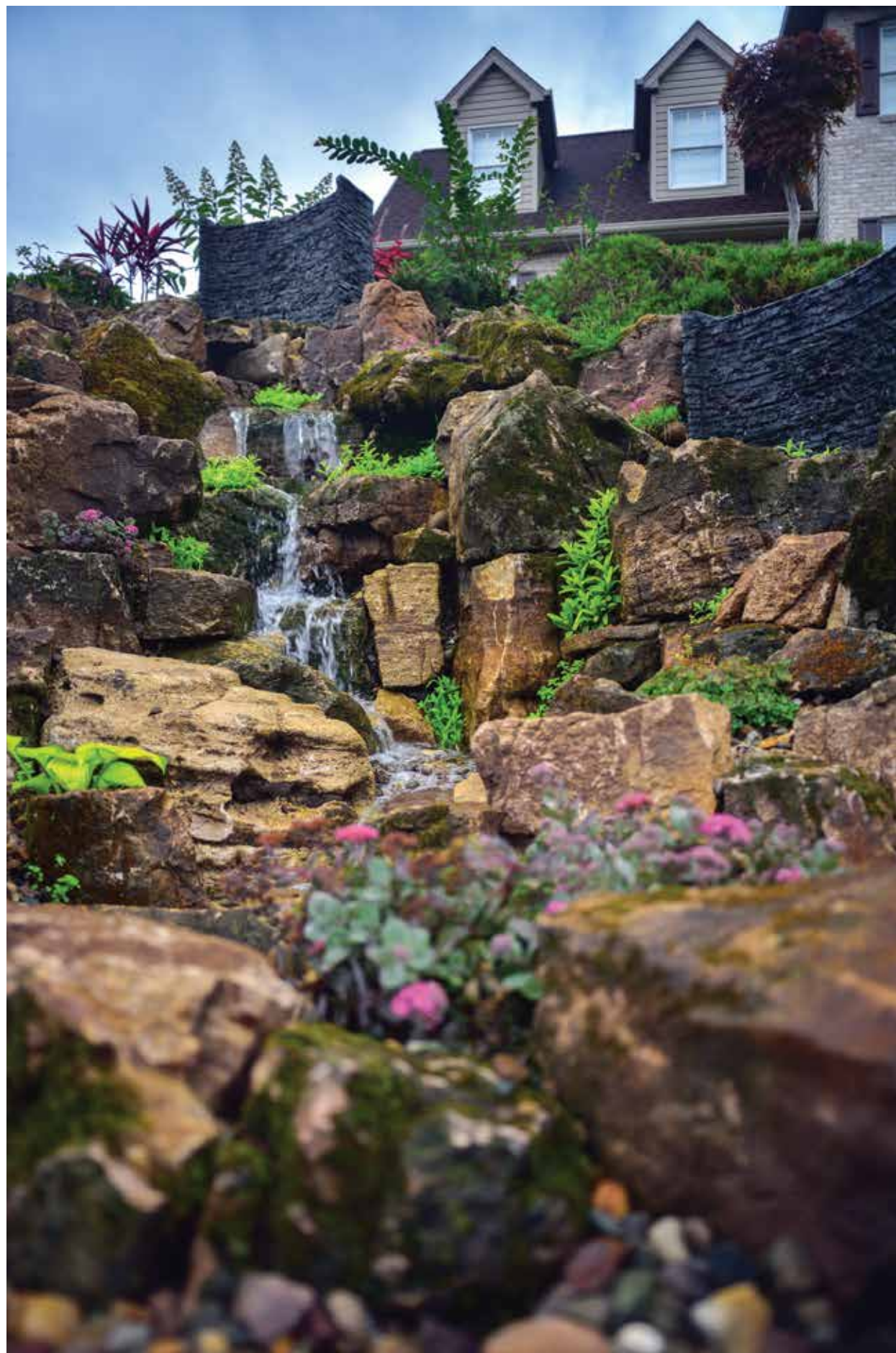
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Naturally Inspired

Building artistic points of interest is all in the details

by Tim Wood & Tim Anderson

Aquatic Edge

During the various stages of building a water feature, do you ever have trouble visualizing the details that will set your feature apart from the crowd? It's OK — most of us do!

After building naturally inspired water features for several years, studying natural water environments and learning from some of the most artistically talented pond builders in the industry, we have identified a handful of design elements that we now look to incorporate into all the water features that Aquatic Edge installs. And the cool thing is, these are mostly simple techniques that can make a large impact in the final product.

Here are five tips to help you focus on the little details that will make you a more artistic pond builder:

1. Dig with Purpose

Beyond the basics of marking utilities and working safely around equipment, you can dig

with an artful eye as well.

If your pond has a stream — even if it's relatively short — consider excavating a turn that will shift the focus or even hide a waterfall from the main view. When there are multiple viewing angles, this is a great way to make sure that every angle has a view of a waterfall. It also adds a sense of mystery and intrigue when you can't see every inch of a water feature from one angle. Consider the view from the patio. What will it look like from the kitchen window? And perhaps most importantly, what is the first thing the customer sees when they arrive home from work? Make sure you discuss this with your clients beforehand. While some homeowners will appreciate such a design idea, some may prefer to have sight of all waterfalls from one central view — and that's OK, too. It's their pond, after all.

Another tip that may help your creativity flow toward the final design is to over-dig the perimeter shelf during the excavation process. This will help you by providing more space to set large and small-edge boulders in a creative manner. A basic shelf will limit you to using

Brightly colored greenery (far left) tucks into the rock work to help naturalize and soften the edges. Dianthus (top right) is one of our favorite plants for rock nooks. Water forget-me-nots (bottom right) will thrive anywhere that stays damp.

similarly sized boulders in a predictable pattern, which can lead to the uninspiring "pearl-necklace effect." You will need to be sure to have ample liner, as using larger rocks and additional contours will greatly increase the liner requirement.

2. Get Naturally Inspired

We use this term quite often, as it clearly explains our mindset and

A perfectly executed, naturally inspired design can be a thing of absolute beauty. But sometimes, the surrounding decor calls for something a little different. When the situation calls for a touch of formality, we like to add some flat-stack to the design.

design style when we are working on installation projects. What does it mean? It means that we understand the compromise that exists between natural and man-made. A natural stream in the woods is a beautiful thing that inspires unending creativity, but in many cases, there are visual details that just won't work in a residential backyard setting, such as overhanging dirt banks, eroding shorelines, invasive vegetation and more. We need to consider that we are using man-made materials such as liner, skimmers and pumps that need to be hidden as well as protected from outside debris. We also have to be sure that our pond will be able to withstand some elemental beatings from heavy rain, while keeping the surrounding mulch and plant roots out of the water. So, "naturally inspired" means we are creating a beautiful water feature that contains design cues from nature but is also built with the intent of being structurally sound and low maintenance.

When placing boulders along the perimeter edge of the pond, the easy and sometimes subconscious thing to do is to place each boulder side by side

so they appear to fit together neatly. For a basic installation, there's nothing wrong with the technique. However, if you want to add an artistic touch, try nestling some rocks together. This accomplishes two important design elements. First, it adds dimension to the pond perimeter without taking up too much extra room. Second, it aids in hiding the seams where rocks come together. I'm not a fan of bottom

seams. If I can see where a boulder touches the ground, it often looks unnatural. You have to be mindful of rock size when nestling them together. It's best to set the larger rock first, then one or two smaller rocks in front to get the proper effect.

A perfectly executed, naturally inspired design can be a thing of absolute beauty. But sometimes, the surrounding decor calls for something a little different. When the situation calls for a touch of formality, we like to add some flat-stack to the design. Flat-stack is thin flagstone and rock hammers that create a slightly structured element and lends a complementary contrast to the natural-looking boulder placement. You definitely will want to talk about this style with your client beforehand and show them sample photos, because they may not like the idea. This style also adds considerable time to the installation, so if you use it, adjust the price of the project accordingly.

3. Visualize Flowing Water

Flowing water is a true force of

nature. Water cuts through solid rock over millions of years. We don't have that much time to wait for our projects, so you'll want to pick some rocks that already have the characteristics of being stream weathered.

When your rock delivery arrives, you should take some time to pick out the boulders for your waterfall spillways, while keeping an eye out for rocks with smooth curves and pockets that you can use along the stream sides. Hard-edged boulders and square-shaped stones look unnatural in a stream. We like to pick boulders that have some sort of channel, overhang or lip, and place them in the stream so they look like the water has been flowing against them forever.

You'll always find different sizes of rock within streambeds. Some large anchor boulders help to define direction changes, whereas a mix of small river stone and larger cobblestone will accumulate along some of the edges due to periodic deposition of stones during flood events. You can take this idea and downsize it on your projects. Steer away from straight lines of equally sized rocks on the edge — you have to change it up! Also be sure to add large cobble pieces within the stream to break up the expanse of small river rock. Cobblestones will add some character to the water current, creating little riffles and miniature eddies that accentuate the overall natural feel.

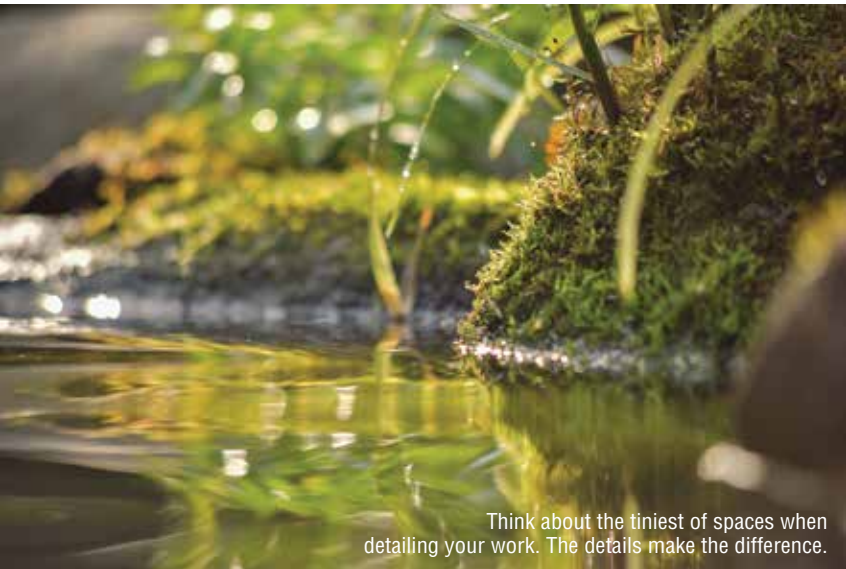
4. Soften the Edges

You can have the nicest rock work in the world, but all that rock can be overpowering if there are no plants to

Flat-stack flagstone (top, left) was blended with weathered limestone and plenty of greens in this award-winning design. Completely hiding waterfall filters (middle, left) while making it look natural is difficult, but it's worth the effort. A fern tucks into a shady spot (bottom, left) between large boulders.



A touch of moss on the waterline adds a natural appeal.



Think about the tiniest of spaces when detailing your work. The details make the difference.



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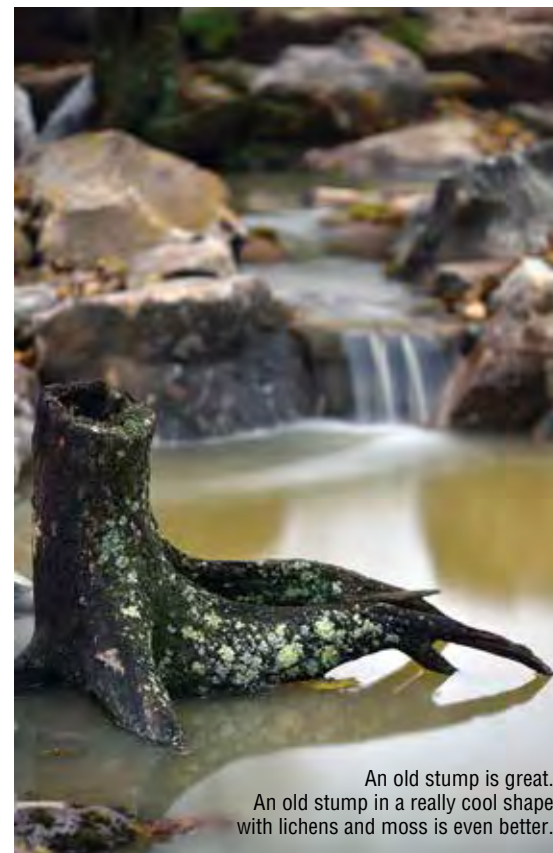
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An old stump is great.
An old stump in a really cool shape
with lichens and moss is even better.

soften the look.

Succulents are great for planting in gravel pockets along the liner edge. Low-growing, shallow-water plants such as parrot feather and water forget-me-not look beautiful tucked into the seams between rocks. Moss is one of our favorites to use when hiding gaps between rocks and other awkward areas. Waterfall foam is a great base for live moss. You can also use annuals in and around the aquatic edges to add some colorful pop to the project.

In recent years, we have begun adding more aquatic plantings and edge plantings to our projects, while actively trying to sell more landscaping upgrades, because it truly makes a huge difference in the final aesthetic look. When we add landscape plantings, it allows us to walk away with a completely finished product — not to mention a great photo for our marketing material.

Driftwood, stumps and logs also help to soften the look of all the stone. You're basically using these pieces to break up the straight lines of rock seams. So even though a wood element may be the same color as the rocks, you are still benefiting visually from the change in shape and texture. When you find the perfect spot for a piece of driftwood or stump, it will be magical! We like to have part of the wood element touching the water, which adds a really nice, natural touch.

Be thoughtful when selecting and placing wood in and around a water feature. It shouldn't be rotten; it needs to have some natural character and ideally will have moss or lichens growing on it. And don't just place a small log perpendicularly across a stream — incorporate it in a way that looks natural.

5. Stop, Look, and Listen

We like to step back and critique



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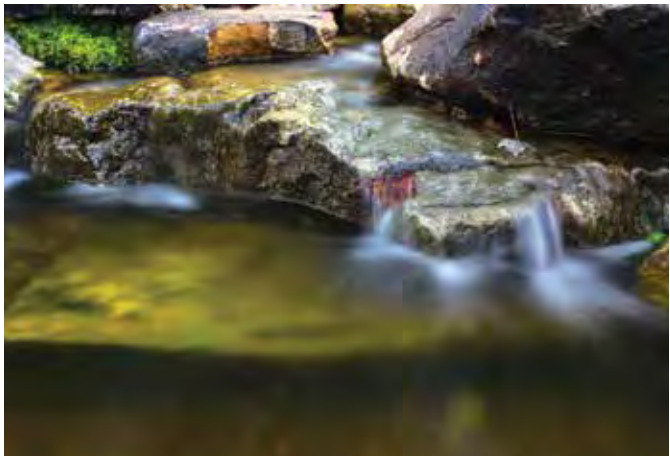


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Though this pond is relatively small (left), a lot of digging and thought went into creating the multiple viewing angles. Sometimes it just comes down to selecting the perfect rock (right) from your pile.

our own work. Acknowledging your favorite and least-favorite elements in a water feature that you personally built will make you a better pond builder. We do this many times during the course of the project. Look at the feature from all angles, just as your client will. It's great to have a sense of urgency to complete a job and stay on task, but we've found it to be just as important to stop from time to time along the way to be sure we are living up to our own design standards.

Step back and look at your finished project. Find a little spot that you really

like. Now, look at that same spot through the lens of a camera. I can almost guarantee that there will be a negative detail that you notice through the lens that you did not see with the naked eye. Looking through a lens confines your focus and allows you to pick up on flaws that you might not have noticed otherwise. But be careful, because you don't want to spend too much time inspecting all the nooks of your water feature and making an unnecessary number of changes. We use this technique as more of a visual sweep to go through the design quickly, just to make sure there are no

glaring issues that need to be adjusted.

The final (really final) step is to sit beside the finished project and take it all in. Clear your mind, listen to the falls and look slowly throughout the entire installation. Look for the details you implemented. Think about what you might change if you were to build it again. Go ahead and admire some of the nicer elements and point them out to your teammates. It's not easy for everyone to notice the little details. But once they become a part of your focus, you'll find it simpler to achieve amazing results that can set you apart from the crowd. ☞

About the Author

KeyStone Balance is the artistic stone balance work of Pennsylvania native **Tim Anderson**. He performs his gravity-defying craft at events all over the world. His work began as a result of a climbing injury that sidelined him during the 2011 season. Spending time along the river, having an artistic background and being influenced by cairns he encountered during his winter travels in the mountains, Tim began his playful venture into stone balancing during the recovery process.

Things quickly took off, and his artistic career was launched. He met Tim Wood, founder of Aquatic Edge, in 2014, and very little time passed before he started helping him with water feature design and construction. He now works full time at Aquatic Edge as a project coordinator. He is the resident "stone guru" and precariously balances stones as KeyStone Balance.

For more information, please visit www.keystonebalance.com.



About the Author

Tim Wood began his career in aquatics nearly twenty years ago with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Nine years ago he founded Aquatic Edge, a full-service water garden design, repair and installation company and lake management company operating in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area. Aquatic Edge is a two-time Water

Artisans of the Year winner and a Master Certified Aquascape Contractor. Tim also serves on the board of directors for the Society of Lake Management Professionals, a national group of private pond and lake management companies working to advance the industry of Pond and Lake Management.

In his spare time, Tim enjoys coaching youth sports, fishing and spending quality time with his wife and two children.



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| **Best Practices** |



A view of the desert to the west from the new lots

SERIES: Best Pond Practices

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

Living on the Edge

Naturalistic approaches to a pond's perimeter

by Kent Wallace,
Living Water Solutions

A living pond is an artificial body of water with the functional capability of supporting aquatic life. The proper function of a living pond has little to nothing to do with its aesthetic makeup. The visual appearance of a pond relies upon a combination of how well it fits into the surrounding space and what the client desires.

Many contractors and DIY-ers have the talent to build beautiful waterfalls and streams. Given a great deal of artistic license, those who view a water feature know it's not a natural environment — it's created. In that light, we've coined the term "naturalistic."

The Edge Treatment

When an owner, landscaper, landscape architect or contractor sits down to design a pond, they reference building materials that

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The look of the natural wash is mostly dirt (left). The 3/4-inch layer of polymer and soil (right) covers the concrete edge.



are familiar and at their disposal. Rocks, boulders, plants and some landscaping materials are the choice in a natural landscape pond; brick, tile and flagstone-shaped materials are the choices in a formal design.

Doesn't this beg the real question, "What's the edge going to look like?" Isn't the "edge treatment" what most aesthetic design parameters revolve around? The edge treatment serves as the initial appearance of a water feature. How well a builder deals with the edge is indicative of the quality of his or her work. Even a stream bed with strategically placed spills and carefully selected stones for flow is defined by the treatment of its edge.

Part of the job of the edge treatment

is to secure the waterproofing membrane. Formal edged ponds have the liner or polyurea secured under the top cap with a slight overhang of a couple of inches to hide the narrow band of exposed waterproofing along the top just above the waterline. Sometimes the inside edge, which is just under the top cap, is covered with vertical flagstone or tile for a more finished look.

In naturalistic landscape ponds, the rubber liner or polyurea is secured in place with block or colored, exposed or sanded concrete secured in place with stones and boulders. Eric Triplett ("The Pondigger") sometimes uses a system where the liner is brought up above water level a couple of inches and then folded back down on the outside before it's trimmed and backfilled with soil, rocks, boulders and plantings on each side. This allows adjustment over time with the extra folded liner. Many times, he plants on both sides of the liner with no concrete, making the liner disappear and creating a more natural look. This method allows for future adjustment with the additional liner when plantings

push and manipulate the liner over time.

Added Difficulty

Formal ponds don't require the illusion of a natural environment. Naturalistic ponds are a different story. When we travel into the wilderness, we notice that the edges of streams, ponds and lakes are not necklaced with rocks and boulders. There may be tree roots and plants that hide the edges and control erosion, with rocks and boulders scattered here and there — but mostly it's dirt.

In the past, my solution was putting a mixture of colored concrete and aggregate between mindfully placed stones. No. 12 sand is thrown on top to create a sanded look. After it cures, the surface gets acid washed, and what's left is a thin layer of sand stuck to the surface, with the other aggregates and colored cement in the background. It's a good look, but it still doesn't look completely natural.

The challenge is how to create the look of dirt or sand with the hardness of concrete. Even concrete will deteriorate over time, as biofilm and algae grow onto

and into it. The problem is the transitional space from just below the water level to just above the water level. If only we could put dirt all the way down to a shelf and it would stay there without being washed away, it would make for an ideal edge.

Over the years, I've met many excellent installers who have perfected unique systems of creating a natural look. These people are at the top of their game, and I've learned a lot from each of them.

Mixing it Up

Recently I've been challenged on a very large project with a 2,500-foot stream that flows through a new development and four large ponds in a desert environment. The surrounding landscape between the homes will be left as the natural environment of sand, sandstone boulders and high-desert vegetation. The existing wash flows only when it rains, with part of it running through the locations of the large, newly formed lots. Normally the water rushes down the wash and dissipates into the ground as it flows. Sections of the existing wash need



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Intermittent sandstone boulders (left) mix with the sand edge. The finished experimental edge (right) with the natural soil above it shows how it blends perfectly.

to be rerouted and lined to create a system of continuously running water. The object is to create a recirculating system that looks real and mimics the original wash and surrounding landscape.

I have researched the world of polymer resins used for locking aggregates together for use in hardscapes and tree surround-

ings. Most can't be used in a potable water environment and have limited working time, but I have found one that is biofriendly. Over the last month I have communicated back and forth with the manufacturer, who was skeptical at first. The compound is not meant to be used with dirt or sand, but with various sizes of

clean-washed aggregates in specific ratios. After several experiments, I have come up with a system that works well, gives the look of dirt and can be pounded on with a hammer, giving the contractors a system to follow.

First, build an edge with concrete, blending the floor up the sides about 6

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inches at a slight angle. This gives the polymer-aggregate-sand mixture a foundation to bind. The next day, apply the edge coating. The sand I am using is pulled directly from the washes at the jobsite. Creating the mix with just the

The mix can be formed around any rocks or boulders imbedded in the cement, and small rocks can be pushed into it as you work.

local sand works, but the sand is much more porous and has more surface area than the aggregate. This means using about 40 percent more of the polymer mix than you would with just a No. 12 aggregate or larger.

The material isn't cheap, so keep that in mind. I settled on a combination of 80-percent No. 12 aggregate and 20-percent sand to give it the color

I wanted. The mix creates a compound that can be formed like clay, only grainier. The compound was applied at one-half to three-quarters of an inch thick over the concrete foundation, with the top edge angled back slightly to hold the surrounding soil, catching it like a small dam. As soon as a few feet of edge mix were formed in place, I threw a coat of dry sand on top and pushed small stones in the sand into the surface. The mix can be formed around any rocks or boulders imbedded in the cement, and small rocks can be pushed into it as you work. Once cured, the edge can be pounded on with a hammer. If a piece of the surface sand gets chipped, the mix under it is the same color, because the aggregate base has the same sand mixed into it for color.

I'm excited about using this system. It won't be proper for every job, but in applications where it fits, this new system will give all of us another tool to work with. 

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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We planted 530 waterlilies over a two-day period. The pools are 40, 68 and 60 linear feet, respectively.



The three lily pools wrap around the outdoor eating area and are the focal point from inside the surrounding buildings as well.

| Waterlily Timeline |



Designer trio creates 'waterlily timeline' at D.C. building

by Kelly Billing,
Water Becomes a Garden

In summer 2018, Darren DeStefano, a horticulturist at the General Services Administration (GSA) Public Building Service National Capital Region, and Claro Rodriguez from Plant or Transplant collaborated with me to create the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s now prominent waterlily feature. DeStefano designed a feature that is equal parts reflection, color and simplicity. Rodriguez mastered the deliberate construction, and I created the planting scheme — a statement of transition from the 1880s to modern hybrids.

The grand and straightforward display was intended to provide a destination and a hub of activity, not only for dragonflies, bees, butterflies and birds, but also for the building's employees. If its success were measured by attendance, then the flurry of continual activity would be the testament.

Finite vs. Infinite

A reflection of Allan McCollum's interior work suggests that combinations can be finite or infinite. As for waterlilies, diversification through hybridization has an endless portrayal of color, accomplishment and discovery. This is a finite display of accomplishments and a representation of a potentially infinite number of undiscovered possibilities.

We began with a classic white hybrid from the late 1800s, *Nymphaea x marliacea* 'Albida',

from the infamous hybridizer Joseph Bory Latour-Marliac. This hybrid is as exceptional today as it was then. It is still as highly suited to the earth-bottom ponds of modern day as it was befitting for Claude Monet's Giverny.

There were many new introductions over the years, but it wasn't until the 1990s that the



Darren DeStefano, Claro Rodriguez and a crew member apply the finishing touches of the FDA waterlily project in 2018. Kelly Billing and Marc Marrero plant waterlilies in the background.

pace quickened. Dr. Kirk Strawn introduced hybrids with a new parent, *Nymphaea mexicana*. With that, new color combinations and the discovery of colors not previously known in the world of waterlilies were introduced, like peach and apricot, for example. New attributes



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like flower size have increased in relationship to foliage, with some flowers as large or larger than the leaves. Traditionally situated just above the water, mexicana hybrids gave rise to blossoms standing well above the foliage, mimicking the semi-tropical behavior of one of the parents.

Strawn's breakthroughs were significant and complemented other hybridizer achievements. The creation of new hybrids shifted the focus to the elusive blue and purple color only known to tropical day-blooming water-lilies. Zijun Li's 'Detective Erika' has become the crown jewel of purple hardies, with abundant flowering and striking foliage. It is befitting that it ends the display with jewel-colored purple flowers in magnificent numbers.

My artistic use of a waterlily timeline was inspired by the efforts of hybridizers. As an ardent lover of both old and new cultivars, I had a unique opportunity to characterize their strengths and changes within a specific timeline. It is with deep appreciation that we recognize all the hybridizers for their tedious work creating sumptuous waterlilies to for all to enjoy.

A Complementary Trio

DeStefano is responsible for many of the magnificent gardens on federal properties throughout the Washington, D.C. area under the GSA umbrella. His work is renowned for the heavy use of native and

Every garden on the FDA Campus (top) is an individual work of mutating art. The plants transform each area into a respite for human influence. The outdoor eating area (middle) has a theater cast of bees, butterflies, birds and dragonflies. The waterlilies (bottom) are a big attraction for the more than 10,000 employees of the FDA White Oak campus and its visitors.



The FDA's Waterlily Timeline

Celebrating Hybridizers & Cultivars of Years Past

Albida	white	1880	Latour-Marliac
Denver	cream	1997	Strawn
Lemon Chiffon	pale yellow	1999	Strawn
Joey Tomocik	lemon yellow	1993	Strawn
Clyde Ikins	pale peach	1996	Strawn
Mangkala Ubol	pale peach	1997	Chansilpa
Colorado	pink w/yellow	1994	Strawn
Pink Grapefruit	pink w/yellow	1997	Strawn
Sunfire	apricot	2004	Giles
Pink Sensation	pink w/silver	1947	Slocum
Myra	pink w/white	2006	Giles
Siam Pink #2	pink	2014	Songpanich
Wanvisa	orange	2009	Chansilpa
Detective Erika	purple	2013	Zijun Li



The waterlily pools are a reflection of Allan McCollum's Shapes project, which runs the building interior walls adjacent to the lily display. His collection of 1,728 shapes of hand-cut black walnut wood combine to create more than 30 billion unique shapes, suggesting that combinations can be finite or infinite.

select ornamental plants. There is often a subtle mutation that takes place when the introduction of new plants spread by wind, birds and the like appear on their own. Sometimes they are culled out, and other times they complement the garden and can remain.

He just has that kind of vision. Few people are capable of his ability to manipu-

late cold, hard surfaces into calculated mosaics of texture, depth and color with purpose. Unsuspected occurrences are his specialty.

Rodriguez navigates infrastructure with foresight and understanding. Both stem from his years of experience and acute attention to details. He has been in tune with gardens, construction and their needs for many

years. A former caretaker of the FDA gardens, he has gone on to develop his own company. Plant or Transplant serves the D.C. metropolitan area.

As far as I am concerned, I'm intent on the creative use of aquatic plants. The opportunity to use plants in an artistic manner while encompassing a historical perspective at the same time was appropriate for the site and met the criteria for the final display.

Art in Architecture

The GSA White Oak campus totals 670 acres, with the FDA occupying 130 of them. Before 1993, it was the site of the Department of the Navy's Dahlgren Division, Naval Surface Warfare Center. The property sits just about a mile north of the Washington, D.C., beltway. To serve as a suitable site

for the FDA, all the naval buildings were destroyed except for the main entrance building. It is a bit of an architectural wonder that all the site buildings are taller than the main entrance building, but they are unable to be seen — some are partially sunken below ground.

The GSA has implemented a program called Art in Architecture, which is supported by one-half of one percent of the costs of modernization, repair and alterations of all new federal office buildings. Artists are selected to create pieces that enhance the overall project, showcase visual arts and provide a legacy for the citizens of the country. The projects on the FDA campus are large scale and have a significant presence throughout the halls and common areas. Likewise, the courtyard gardens are powerful and equally impressive. ☞

About the Author



Kelly Billing has 33

years of experience in the water gardening industry wholesale trade. She is currently a lotus grower and industry consultant with a focus on creative, site-appropriate use of aquatic plants for effective, long-term

display. With a rich history in water quality research, she promotes the use of natural processes over chemicals to improve water quality. She compiled and maintains the Regulated Aquatic Plants list for the United States, is a Certified Professional Horticulturist, serves on the Board of Directors for the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society, speaks internationally and writes regularly for various trade magazines and water gardening publications. She has co-written "The Lotus, Know It and Grow It" with Paula Biles and "Water Gardener's Bible" with Ben Helm. For information about way "Water Becomes a Garden," visit www.kellybilling.com.

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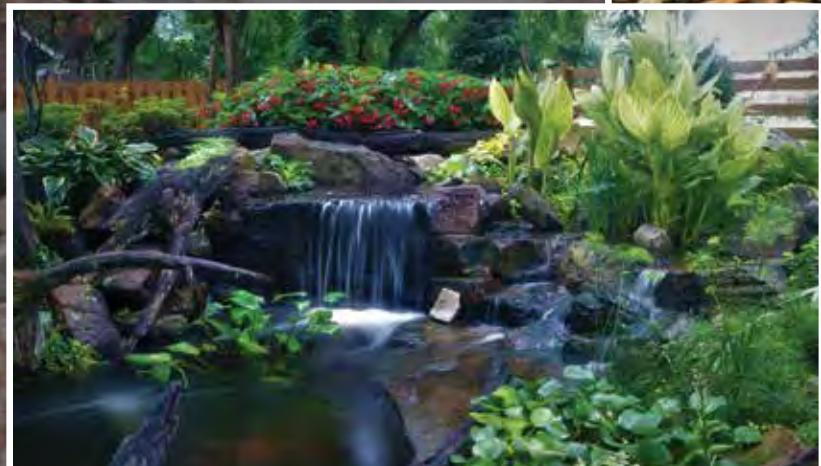
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In order to be eligible, projects must be completed between November 1, 2018 - November 1, 2019. (exception: Ponds Revisited category)

Go to www.pondtrademag.com/2019-water-artisans-of-the-year/ for official rules and entry form.

► **Contest deadline is November 30, 2019.**

| Flashback! |

POND TRADE FLASHBACK!

*From the Archives
This article originally ran in
the Jan/Feb 2013 issue.*

Pond Water Test Kits

Selection and proper use

by **John Olson,**
CEO - Graystone Industries



Those of us in the business understand that in spite of our best efforts, a customer's pond paradise may turn into a nightmare if they do not perform some basic maintenance tasks. To make sure our customers' ponds remain a welcome retreat from an otherwise stressful world, we educate them about proper feeding amounts, how to flush the filter or rise the pads, how to keep away predators, proper circulation and basic plant and fish care tips.

With all the great things we do for our customers, there is one piece of valuable ammo we often fail to arm them with. A simple water test kit is not only an added sale and a precursor to additional treatment purchases, but it also can be the first line of defense in a customer's battle for water quality and a healthy pond.

With so many choices in test kits, parameters

tested, and testing procedures available it is no wonder that some pond retailers and installers often are reluctant to make a recommendation to their customers.

Below we will discuss some of the pond water tests preformed, the types of kits available and how we can better educate our customers on their proper uses.

What tests should be regularly preformed on a backyard pond or water garden?

More than a dozen different tests are routinely done in the water garden industry in order to ensure the best possi-

The time of day for testing varies among experts in our industry with many of them preferring to test at mid day when possible. What everyone agrees upon is to test at the same time each day. Consistency is the key to achieving accurate results and establishing a baseline for your pond.

ble water quality. With tests measuring everything from alkalinity to salinity, it can be a bit overwhelming to know which tests are needed most.

Fortunately, most water quality experts agree on a handful of tests that every industry professional and pond owner should perform.

AMMONIA – Ammonia is formed when fish waste and other organic debris (leaves, grass, dead fish, frogs etc.) begin to decompose. This decomposition releases toxic ammonia into the pond water. A test reading of zero ammonia is best but not always possible.

NITRITE – Nitrifying bacteria work on the ammonia and break it down to nitrite. The nitrite is also highly toxic to your pond fish, and the ideal reading should again be zero.

NITRATE – Eventually nitrite is broken down into nitrate, which is less toxic to your pond fish, although it's still bad enough in higher concentrations. The ideal reading would be zero. Many industry experts suggest testing for both nitrite and nitrate in your pond, but others say testing for nitrite is sufficient.

Norm Meck, former president and 20-year member of the San Diego Koi Club, feels that testing for nitrite is vital due to its high toxicity and danger to the fish. Nitrate, Meck indicates, is far less toxic to pond fish and is also reduced when the pond is treated for nitrite.

pH – Testing the pH of your pond is critical, according to many experts. The ideal pH reading in your pond is debatable by many but is often considered to be 7.0 – 7.5. Keep in mind that pH will vary throughout the day.

According to Freddie Combas, owner of Florida Water Gardens and veteran

pond builder, pH will be lowest in the morning and highest in the evening. Someone who tests their pond in the early morning for pH and again in the evening may see a huge variance in readings. It is important to find an average reading and not be alarmed by a wide swing in the readings during the day.

KH – Carbonate hardness is the total alkalinity, which is different from pH. Carbonate hardness is the ability of the pond water to stabilize the pH in the system. According to Dave Jones, owner of The Pond Professional in Woodstock, Georgia, KH should be at least 100 ppm. Ideal KH readings are between 100-200 ppm.

PHOSPHATES – Phosphates are usually introduced into a pond through fish waste and are a nutrient that algae require to flourish. Algae, like other plants, require many nutrients to grow, so the presence of phosphates alone does not ensure an algae problem is imminent. A reading of zero ppm is ideal, although many ponds can have much higher concentrations with no algae issues present.

What types of test kits are available, and how do they work?

All test kits use a chemical reaction between the sample pond water and a reagent, which causes a color change to show results. The results are compared to known parameters, allowing the user to obtain an accurate reading. Test kits for ponds and water gardens fall into three types.

1. Photometers – These handy meters are highly accurate but are often expensive. Readings are very quick, and some meters can be used for many different tests. Advances in technology bring constant improvements to available meters, but some experts find that the units require frequent recalibration.

2. Liquid test kits – Using small vials, the pond owner takes samples of the pond water. Liquid reagents are added to the samples, and a short time later, the water turns color. The color is compared to the included charts, providing an accurate reading of the water sample. Liquid kits show a high level of accuracy, as they give you many points of reference when the color samples are between shade points in the charts.

3. Dry test strips – Test strips are handy and quick. With the reagents already applied, the strip is dipped in pond water. A short time later, a color shift will occur, which is compared to the provided charts, just like in the liquid kits. Test strips are less mess and very easy to use, often including multiple parameters on each strip. They are a great way to see if the readings are going up or down.

How often should I test my pond, and at what time of day?

Carolyn Weise, consumer relations manager and in-house pond expert for Ecological Laboratories Inc., believes that new ponds should be tested at least once per week. This will establish a baseline for their particular pond. Established ponds with any type of known problem may need to be tested daily and treated until the issue is resolved.

Carolyn also indicates that testing

should be continued through the winter, with water samples taken inside to warm before testing.

The time of day for testing varies among experts in our industry, with many of them preferring to test at mid-day when possible. What everyone agrees upon is to test at the same time each day. Consistency is the key to achieving accurate results and establishing a baseline for your pond.

How long are test kits good for?

As indicated above, pond test kits rely on chemicals known as reagents in order to provide accurate testing results. Those reagents do not last forever and must be replaced. Each reagent may have a different chemical type and could last a different length of time.

Gary Jones of Mars Fishcare in Pennsylvania strongly recommends not using any kit past its expiration date. The dates posted on kits are not "sell-by" dates, but are the best indicators of when the reagents used will cease to provide

accurate results.

Gary maintains that consumers can best protect themselves by checking the expiration dates on kits at the time of purchase and by buying replacement reagents upon expiration. Additionally, he mentions that retailers sometimes fail to consider the expiration date when they stock new kits in front of existing ones.

Proper stock rotation will ensure that customers receive the best possible results from their kits, and retailers will continue to enjoy repeat sales of the water treatments needed for their customers ponds.

Remember to keep your liquid or dry strip kits out of the sun and away from moisture. This will help ensure they remain potent till the expiration date. Test kits that do not contain expiration dates should have their reagents replaced no longer than one year from purchase.

Summation and Safety Note

The pond lifestyle is attracting more and more advocates. With increased pond

ownership, we must ensure that each and every experience in ponding is a pleasant one. The recommendation and use of pond water test kits will help our customers take more responsibility for the upkeep and healthy water quality of their ponds.

As our industry promotes ponds and water gardens as a family activity, it should be noted that pond test kits use reagents that are chemicals. These chemicals, and all others, should be kept safely out of reach of younger ponders. That way we can all enjoy our ponds! ☞

John Olson is the CEO of Graystone Industries and an avid alligator wrestler. Graystone is a distributor for over a dozen brands of quality pond supplies with warehouse and retail locations in Georgia and North Carolina. John resides at Rosemont Estate in North Georgia with his wife and two children. When not riding go carts, gold mining or trout fishing with the children, John helps other businesses achieve their true potential. Visit www.graystonecreations.com.

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The Nexus 320 will filter ponds up to 9,000 gallons. The Nexus 220 will filter ponds up to 4,800 gallons. The EazyPod filters will filter ponds up to 2,640 gallons. Each of these filtration systems can be installed with an Automatic System to drastically reduce pond filtration maintenance.

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Koi Smart Pond Supply 2019 Contractor Appreciation Open House in November

Koi Smart Pond Supply would like to invite all contractors and wholesale customers to attend our second annual open house on Thursday, November 14, 2019 in West Palm Beach, Florida.

We will have multiple industry vendors on hand to give presentations and hold open-forum conversations, which were a huge success last year. New products for 2020 will be on demonstration and display from manufacturers such as Oase, Atlantic Water Gardens, Ecological Laboratories, Hikari USA, Brilliance LED, Delta UV, Pondmaster and many more of your favorite trusted brands. Our customers will enjoy breakfast, a South Florida-style catered lunch, raffles, discounts and a galore of giveaways. Please RSVP by November and contact info@koismart.com for more details.

From construction supplies, filtration and treatments to koi fish, food, and aquatic plants, we're confident that we will meet all your koi pond and water garden needs. Competitive wholesale pricing is available for all contractors and retailers year-round.



Matala Introduces Powerful Continuous Vacuum

The new Matala Power-Cyclone is a contractor-grade, continuous pond vacuum with power-discharge capability. With a vacuum-exhaust capacity of 2,600 gallons per hour, this dual-motor system is balanced in flow rate and is perfect for larger ponds. Its suction motor vacuums up to 1,500 gph, and the ½ Horsepower internal discharge motor removes dirty water at 3,700 gph up to 18 feet in elevation. A 6-foot extension pipe combines with 26 feet of suction hose, allowing for easy handling even during the biggest pond-vacuum jobs. Four different-sized vacuum heads are included.

The Power-Cyclone:

- Features a 13-gallon holding tank;
- Has 26 feet of suction hose;
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- Weighs 70.5 pounds.

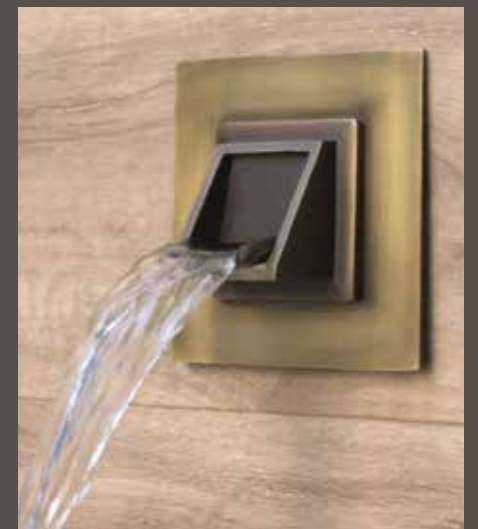
For more information, contact Matala at www.matala.com.



Blue Thumb Announces Purchase of Larger Facility

Blue Thumb has purchased a vacant 126,000 square foot facility in Saginaw, Michigan, and plans to consolidate operations by fall 2019. Blue Thumb is currently spread across five facilities that total more than 50,000 square feet. Company President Kip Northrup said the move was necessary to accommodate their expanding efforts in manufacturing professional-grade fountains and the growth of their rotational molding business. "In addition to the operating efficiencies this move will bring, this will also allow us to aggressively expand into new markets and support our growth into the foreseeable future," he said.

Since 2000, Blue Thumb has been manufacturing products to help you design, install and maintain better water features. For additional information, please visit www.bluthumbponds.com or our company Facebook page.



New Short Square Scupper from Black Oak Foundry

Our newest addition to our line of top-quality brass, bronze and copper water features is our Short Square Scupper. Cast from bronze, this scupper features a brass plate inside of it that diverts the water to the bottom of the feature and creates a flat layer of water and hides the water feed in the rear. This gives a solidly contemporary look that's sure to impress. It is available with or without a brass back plate, if you're looking for a more compact look.

For more information (including videos) on our wide range of top-quality water features, please visit www.blackoakfoundry.com.



Your Pond Farm Trade Show

The 2019 Your Pond Trade Show will be held Tuesday, Oct. 8 (4 - 8 p.m.) and Wednesday, Oct. 9 (9 a.m. - 4 p.m.) at Bear Creek Mountain Resort in Lehigh, Pennsylvania.

All pond professionals, contractors and landscapers are welcome to attend. Retailers use the show as part of their strategic planning for 2020. Customers can place discounted orders at the show for their upcoming season. There is no cost to attend, and there will be show-exclusive prices, hot buys, cashbacks and new products on display. They offer a complimentary meet-and-greet, luncheon, prizes and giveaways.

"We want to help people grow their businesses, and the best way to do that is to show them all that Your Pond Farm has to offer!" said John Holmes, vice president of Your Pond Farm.

During the event, Your Pond Farm offers a variety of educational seminars on varying pond and water-garden topics and professional roundtable discussions throughout the show.

Your Pond Farm provides customers with a one-stop shopping and shipping experience for all their water-gardening needs. Your Pond Farm is a long-term innovator and specializes in internet fulfillment.

Sign up for the trade show today by calling 877/412-3276, or emailing sales@yourpondfarm.com. A link is also available on our website. You can book your hotel by calling Bear Creek Mountain Resort at 866/754-2822. Be sure to mention the promo code YPF19 to get a discounted rate.

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Read more about the company at www.focusindustries.com.

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