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In our last issue, Jason Lenox wrote about a long drive, a rural farmhouse and a customer with enormous ideas. Now, in the second half of a two-part series, the owner of Ponds Inc. describes how he turned a large-scale plan into a pond installation that surpassed even his own expectations!

17 Divide and Conquer
While they may not wine and dine like we do, the plants in your pond reproduce with a voracity that would make Hugh Hefner blush! Nature’s bountiful procreation strategy provides big opportunities for growers — if they know how to harness it. Do you know the differences between division, viviparous parenthood and tissue culture? If not, be sure to read Paula Biles’ story on the romance that is plant propagation.

22 Natural Pond and Lake Management
Even the most experienced koi keeper or water gardener can be intimidated by natural ponds and lakes. But don’t let their size fool you: they are a untapped profit center with an easier learning curve than you might think. Follow Rick Weidman’s advice to turn the natural water bodies in your area into new growth for your business!

26 Blackbird Gift Sacs
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32 No Quick Fix
Are you thinking about bringing your brick and mortar pond business online? If so, turn to pg. 32, where John Olson dispels some of the common myths and misconceptions about Internet marketing and ecommerce in terms any technophobe will understand. While the road ahead may be time-consuming and expensive, following these tips can help make all the effort worthwhile.

36 Basic Beauty
For many koi lovers, koi appreciation is about admiring the juxtaposition of colors. When it comes to Hikari Muji, however, all of the beauty is conveyed in just one hue. Check out Kent Wallace’s explanation (and advice) on pg. 26.

39 Ponds by the Numbers
For better or worse, the pond industry operates with minimal governing codes and laws. But according to Kent Wallace, the health of the industry would be well-served by a few common guidelines. Starting with the ones on pg. 40! Cater your next pond installation to Kent’s numbers and watch your success rate soar.

44 One Voice for the Koi
Maryellen Malinowski’s mission began with a single koi rescued from a garbage bin. Nearly 200 koi later, The Koi Whisperer’s mission is still the same: to give voices to these colorful creatures, enabling them to live healthy and happy lives. In the process, she has inspired countless people of all ages to join her cause around the world.

50 The Twitterization of Facebook
Facebook is one of the most powerful tools in the history of marketing … and it’s evolving. With the advent of Facebook hashtags (like #PondTrade), pond businesses now have a greater opportunity to reach and communicate with customers than ever before. Are you leveraging hashtags to their fullest potential? If not, turn to pg. 30 and discover how to grow your organization in ways your business professor never imagined.

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Well-written article and story is also well-described.

- Henry Jordan, Duckweed Control

Not surprising when I read this piece, I was dismayed by the grotesque implications, particularly those that my firm, Liquid Designz, is somehow unconcerned with safety. The lead paragraph mocks our language about the beauty and imagination encompassed in a beautiful installation as though at the expense of bathing safety. Really?

That, my friends, is a cynical straw-man premise of the most misleading and intellectually bereft perspective.

- Benjamin Timmermans, Liquid Landscapes

Well-researched and written article. Great job by author. After reading about Ms. Copeland’s fate, why anyone would intentionally expose themselves, loved ones or customers while creating a very unique product. Best to all …

- Keith Bradly, Ocean Environmental

Well-written article and the story is also well-described.

- Dave Jones, The Pond Professional

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www.koicubsandiego.org

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The Aquascape’s CHICAGOMONUM
Chicago, Illinois
866/877-6635
www.aquascapeinc.com

May 6 - 8
National Hardware Show
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.nationalhardwareshow.com

Issue 

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by Jason Lenox, 
Ponds Inc. of Illinois

Watching the beautiful Illinois countryside go by, I was thankful for the three-hour drive back home. My visit to a large farm in Galena, Ill. had been a successful one; the owner was hoping to turn his beautiful property into an even more beautiful water feature of immense proportions. Having just taken a tour around the premises, I knew our team at Ponds Inc. could create it! But first, I needed these hours of solitude to design and plan ideas, putting them on my voice recorder to be retrieved later when I was in the office.

The Design

The completed design would have a large platform area a short walk away from the new home’s patio. This platform would also make a fantastic cliff face and double as an area to jump into the pond. Natural ledges would form a staircase down to the beach area, located on the southwest point of the triangle. Jetting would be incorporated all throughout the beach and all along the new home’s side of the pond to increase water flow.

Over in the valley on the northwest point of the triangle, we would create a simulated, spring-fed stream that would have an area the family could cross with all-terrain vehicles or carts. Across the pond, on the pole building side, we would have large, dramatic waterfalls that could easily be viewed from both houses and the beach, which would have another cliff area that could be planted and would give the beach area a secluded feel.

No Small Plans

Planning this pond was not the same as it would be for a much smaller creation, and it wasn’t like you could get the can of spray paint out to lay out the lines! I did the next best thing, though — I built a scale, 3D model of the pond after designing it, complete with shelves. The reason for this was to calculate the liner size. Liners of this size can be extremely costly, so every dollar saved is a benefit.

Normally when figuring out your liner, you are working with rectangular shapes. A rectangular shape for this pond would have been over 100,000 square feet! Too big and too expensive, it would have also
required seaming.

Instead, I figured on using a 36 mil, triple-reinforced polypropylene liner, which is thinner than the 60 mil but much stronger, according to the manufacturer. A single piece was available up to 50,000 square feet. The manufacturer had never made a triangular piece before — especially one that large! This is not where I wanted to be a pioneer, but I knew that as long as I had a scale model, that liner should work, right? Of course! (I knew this because MythBusters, that great television series on TLC, uses scale models for their experiments all the time! If it works for those fellas, then why shouldn’t it work for me?)

Using a thin piece of triangular cloth cut to scale, I worked it around the shelves of my model, repeatedly checking for excesses. It seemed to be fine and I knew I could cut considerable cost by ordering it cut in a large, triangular shape. I continued to calculate rock quantities and system components. The final proposal was completed and after meeting once again with the client, the project was approved to be completed in 30 working days! Galena, here we come!

Hauling Rock

Another challenge to overcome was getting stone to our work site and deciding where to stage it for selection once it was there. We were informed by the builder that we could not place any rock anywhere near the new home side of the pond, and that they needed us to keep the road open for their all-terrain forklift to transfer timber from the pole building to the house site. This is where they had a saw mill set up. We only had a small staging area to work with, located about 2,000 feet from the pond on the hill just beyond the pole building. Still, the bigger problem was getting the stones there. The quarry was approximately 10 miles away through winding hills — and located in another state! All this and done in 30 days? No worries: the fellas at Ponds Inc. are problem solvers!

Luckily, we were able to solicit the use of a driver and use a large, off-road, heavy hauling dump truck for use on the road. I’m not sure how this was allowed,
but the local powers of the area granted its use on the road! The truck engulfed the entire roadway and its shoulders and was used to haul approximately 1,400 tons of large, shot-blasted quarry stones. The stones ranged from an average 5,000 to 10,000 pounds up to 20,000 pounds or more! These were some serious sized stones … in fact, we ran the quarry out of stone twice between blasts!

We continued on with excavation and layout and kept as many stones as possible in the staging area while they were able to haul. We also had continuous trucking of gravel and washed river rock from the Mississippi River trucked to the feeding platform around the silo. This feeding area had a great concrete pad for the gravel to be staged. There are many other challenges we could talk about, like mud, breaking lifting straps, refueling and extremely tight working conditions with big machines … but they go with the jobs that we know and love. Passion fuels the desire to get the impossible achieved!

The End Result

Careful planning with the end in mind is what lead us to completing this job in 35 working days, in spite of large obstacles. This project has over 2,000 tons of stone installed and a flow rate of approximately 110,000 gallons per hour! There are three 30,000 gallon-per-hour Grindex Pumps installed in Aquascape pump vaults, which have the Snorkel/Centipede units and extensions. These vaults are located in key locations and are set at depths of six to eight feet to maximize constant water flow. Three Aquascape Pondless Vaults house three Aquascape PRO 10,000 gallon-per-hour pumps used for the elaborate jetting systems. Several Aquascape Centipede Modules and two Snorkels were used in the 70-foot by 50-foot wetlands bog filtration system. 30 Aquascape six-watt LED lights and 30 more three-watt LED lights were
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installed to give the pond dramatic nighttime visual effects. None of the lights face the home, giving it a resort-like feel. We also performed enhanced custom features, such as pump lines that all pitch downward and self-drain to a large, concrete underground vault for ease of winter preparation. Two large stones, each 10 feet long, were used for stairs leading down into the beach area. One of these stones had a five-foot-long, raised, cone-like fossil, and the other was the reverse of the same fossil — a very prehistoric custom effect that was made millions of years ago, right in the area! Specialized electrical planning was also done, along with too many other conveniences to list.

Planning and Experience

Should big ponds be built the same as small ponds? The answer is “yes” … if you follow a well-designed system! Of course, the answer is “no” if careful planning isn’t a part of your system and if the ability to overcome large obstacles isn’t on your resume. Experience plays a major role in your ability to complete projects like these in spite of weather conditions and other challenges. The important thing to remember is that little ponds tend to have little problems and big ponds tend to have big problems. Big problems can be very costly and dangerous.

Ponds Inc. has been building ponds for many years following the Aquascape design method, which has resulted in ponds with clear water and happy clientele. So when it came time to design and build this large pond based on the client’s primary objectives, we knew that if we wanted clear water and a trusted method that works, we’d better build it the best way we knew worked.

This pond was designed and built the same way we build a small backyard water feature. We dug multiple shelves, installed drainage and underlayment, placed rocks and gravel over a liner and installed a stream and a wetlands bog filter. This system produces crystal clear water gardens, and this large, one-acre water garden is not any different. Indeed, it’s had crystal clear water for over two years.

This system was perfected by the Aquascape team, and Ponds Inc. of Illinois has installed some of their largest systems and landscapes for them. We knew that their system has worked for them and has proven to work for us. This is how we easily ruled out the option for a pond without a liner, even on a large scale.

Sustainability planning now also plays a major role in all our ponds. We always look at drainage runoff and how it will affect the pond and its ecosystem. For this large project in Galena, we had the local excavator cut channels along the top of the hills where the farm fields were located. This was done to divert the flow of runoff rainwater from rapidly entering the pond through the ravine during a downpour, channeling it instead to flow down the hillsides away from the pond. We also installed a series of rock dams in the ravine to slow the rainwater down and to help filter our contaminants. This is important even for your small ponds. Always be concerned about what flows into your pond.

The Finished Product

The client was extremely pleased with how this project turned out. His family and guests totally enjoy the pond and enjoy coming to the farm! The mission was established with our client in the beginning and we met his primary objectives with an end in mind, using methods that we knew worked. Mission accomplished! No matter the size of the project, never underestimate a client’s ambitions and always be positive about the outcome. Approach each project that way, and you’ll end up with BIG results every time!

About the Author

Jason Lenox and his brother Tony Lenox are owners of Ponds Inc. of Illinois in Gilberts, Ill. The company has been serving the Chicagoland area for 23 years and has built some of the state’s largest water features. They specialize in ponds of all types and sizes and are leaders of their industry in water gardens and koi ponds. Ponds Inc. of Illinois is available for consulting, design and installation locally and anywhere a project takes them. Visit them at www.ponds-inc.com

March/April 2014

POND Trade Magazine
Birds do it ... bees do it ... koi definitely do it ... and so do plants. In fact, aquatic plants reproduce very freely, although much more discreetly than koi. The big difference with aquatics is that they use multiple reproduction methods ... and sometimes the same plant uses several at once!

Nature’s bountiful procreation strategy provides obvious opportunities for growers. However, it can also be profitable for other water garden and pond businesses. Because aquatics have never-ending reproduction cycles, there is an ongoing need both for midwives to help with the process and for using the added plants. This basic introduction to aquatic plant propagation will help you determine ways to expand your services and meet this ongoing need.

**Down and Dirty: The Basic, Most Popular Method**

Water gardeners often use division, which is the simplest and most common technique for propagating plants. It also happens to be the easiest, quickest and most reliable way to get more full-sized plants.
just like the parent. Division is not difficult, although it’s messy and definitely gets dirt under your fingernails. (Neat folks use rubber gloves ... extra long are best.) Of course, if your koi have spawned, you already know the meaning of messy.

There are numerous factors that influence how long to wait before a plant will need dividing: length of growing season, plant variety, container size, soil, fertilizing schedule, amount of sun and pest damage. Besides making more plants, there is another benefit: dividing overgrown specimens can be good for them.

The overgrowth becomes stunted and stressed and is more likely to be attacked by pests. These plants are also untidy and have fewer blooms. In northern areas, a plant may need dividing every other year. In warmer climates with longer growing seasons, annual division may be necessary. (Some businesses offer this service to busy pond owners who don’t want the hassle. It provides added income and generates extra plants to sell later. It is also a popular topic for seminar schedules.)

**Up to Your Elbows in Plants: Making the Job Easier**

Some procedures will make propagating aquatics quicker and less stressful for both you and the plants. Most importantly, work in the shade whenever possible, especially when dividing or repotting waterlilies. Lily pads wilt and die very quickly when out of the water. Always keep any offshoots or cuttings moist until they can be planted.

The time of year that’s best for any type of plant propagation depends upon location, with spring being the most popular in both warm and cool climates. The new plants created then have a full season to develop. Because the air and water temperatures are more comfortable in late summer or fall, water gardeners sometimes divide overgrown plants then, after the aquatics have gotten to full size or outgrown their pots. This must be done with enough time for the plants to recover before winter arrives.

When dividing an overgrown potted plant, such as iris or papyrus, take it out of the pot and hose away all the soil. With the roots exposed, it becomes easier and safer to cut or pull apart the mass of roots. Trim away the older growth and keep only the newer sections for repotting. In cases of extreme overgrowth, it may be necessary to use a sharp shovel or a chainsaw to cut through stubborn clumps.

When reporting the separated plants, place them in the pot based on their growth preference. For horizontally rooted plants (iris or hardy waterlilies) put the older section toward the container’s outside edge. For vertical-growing plants (tropical lilies, for instance) place the round tuber in the middle. Planting this way allows maximum room for new growth and extends the time before reporting will be necessary.

Extra plants should never, ever be discarded into the wild. For some invasive aquatic plants it might even be illegal. The potential for damage to local ecosystems is extremely high. If you can’t keep the excess for resale or to exchange with a colleague, add them to your compost pile. As a related note, you should always be up to date with aquatic plant varieties that are prohibited by federal and state regulations. (For a printable list, visit http://www.pondtrademag.com/resources.)

**The Methods of Plant Reproduction**

Unlike koi, plants have more than one way to produce offspring. In fact, it is common for aquatics to use multiple reproduction techniques. Certain tropical waterlilies are excellent examples. They produce seeds from the flower, offshoots from the tuber-like root and new little plants from the leaves.

We’ve already covered the popular and common division propagation method. However, there are times when other techniques may also be suitable for your business.

**Division of rootstock:** For convenience, this is the recommended method of aquatic plant propagation. Frequently used for marginals and waterlilies, the root masses are separated by pulling or cutting. This type of reproduction guarantees a second plant just like the parent, plus quick development of

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**Let Me Count the Ways:**

**The Methods of Plant Reproduction**

We've already covered the popular and common division propagation method. However, there are times when other techniques may also be suitable for your business.

**Division of rootstock:** For convenience, this is the recommended method of aquatic plant propagation. Frequently used for marginals and waterlilies, the root masses are separated by pulling or cutting. This type of reproduction guarantees a second plant just like the parent, plus quick development of...
Seeds can be used to propagate some aquatics. It’s an inexpensive way to produce lots of plants, but unfortunately, seed propagation can take the longest to produce full-sized plants. Another factor is that like other sexual reproduction methods, the offspring may not look like the parents.

- **Seeds**: Although not all aquatics produce seeds, this method can be the easiest and cheapest way to obtain a large quantity of new plants. Unfortunately, seed propagation can take the longest to produce full-sized plants. Another factor is that like other sexual reproduction methods, the offspring may not look like the parents.

- **Offshoots from tubers and rhizomes**: Waterlilies and some marginals can be propagated by cutting or breaking off the new eyes or side shoots from the parent rootstock. This occurs with both tubers of tropical lilies and rhizomes of hardy lilies or marginals. The little buds are then potted and will develop into a full-sized plant, usually within a growing season.

- **Cuttings**: Some hardy aquatics can be propagated by stem cuttings, just like terrestrial plants. It is an easy way (neater than division) to get more plants exactly like the parents.

- **Runners**: There are aquatic plants that send out runners with lots of new little plants, which send out runners with lots of new little plants, and ... you get the idea. Water hyacinth is a well-known example that can overtake a body of water (small or large) if not killed by cold.

- **Viviparous**: This unusual method of plant parenthood is used by certain tropical waterlilies. New plants grow from the lily pads, piggyback-style. They can be potted and quickly develop into full-sized lilies. Although rare, a few hardy lilies produce new plantlets from the flowers. Some papyrus varieties are viviparous and produce offspring from the mop-like top of each stalk.

- **Tissue culture**: Also called cloning, this is done by a few specialized companies. Only a limited number of aquatics can be propagated this way. However, if significant quantities are required, tissue culture is a profitable way to produce completely uniform plants. The “Dwarf Giant” papyrus is a successful example. Research continues to find other aquatics suitable for this technique.

Multiply and Be Profitable

Propagating plants is not rocket science. It is learning how to understand and utilize the plants’ natural growing cycles. In our field, this is especially important because aquatics grow in restrictive environments and need human assistance to adapt and to look good. Thus, mastery of basic propagation techniques can help you maximize both the aquatic plants’ appearance and your opportunities for profit from that knowledge.

The Joy of Sex: Who Does it More, Plants or Koi?

Well, that all depends...

- **Koi**: Usually breed once in the spring. Plants do it throughout the growing season.
- **With** koi, there’s a lot of movin’ and shakin’ goin’ on. Plant sex is gentle and low key.
- **Koi must** have a male and a female. Plants can produce offspring from a single parent.
- **Koi** always follow the same routine. Plants do it many different ways.
- **Unlike a koi**, an aquatic plant can be divided into multiple parts that grow and thrive.

One overgrown tropical lily produced all these offshoots (left). They can be potted to grow up looking exactly like the mother plant. Tropical waterlilies grow from round tubers (middle), which develop small side tubers. Those can be separated and potted. Hardy waterlilies (right) grow from horizontal rhizomes. The small offshoots can be cut off and potted. They’ll mature rapidly.
Natural Pond and Lake Management

Stop turning this business away!

by Rick Weidman, Vice President of Business Development, Airmax

H ere’s a good question to ask yourself: Am I capturing all I can in natural pond and lake management sales … and profits? Based on what I’ve seen over the past five years, the answer is likely a resounding “No!”

When I ask this question of contractors and retailers, most say that they feel they have a strong grasp on water gardening and water feature sales and construction, having done it for many years — and that they enjoy the status of being “experts” in their markets. So, what’s keeping them from becoming experts in natural pond and lake management as well? I’ve come to realize that for some, it’s the fear of the unknown; others say they are just too busy to learn or lack available shelf space or available inventory dollars; many others say they just didn’t think there was much business to be had “selling pond dye.” Well, I can tell you this; it’s a lot more than just selling pond dye.

Fear of the Unknown

About five years ago, after spending about 15 years selling water garden products, I changed my focus to natural ponds and lakes. Prepared to tackle learning something new but hoping I could tap into my 15-year water garden education, I was amazed at how different the learning curve was for this new arena I was entering. There’s a lot less to learn and remember about providing pond and lake solutions. I found you can become knowledgeable quite quickly.

“So why are so many business owners unwilling to explore or tackle this pretty cool pond category?” I asked myself. “What’s to learn or fear?”

First, there’s the mechanics of managing water: understanding subsurface, or bottom, aeration and how it can benefit any body of water. This isn’t complicated machinery; typically it’s easy to install and operate and highly effective at improving and maintaining water quality. Sure, there are technical aspects that can be learned over time, but with a manufacturer’s support and training, it’s really not that difficult to understand and learn.

Second, there’s the treatment side of water management, typically a combination of chemicals and/or natural treatments. While all states require licensing to professionally apply chemicals in natural ponds, most states allow consumers to treat their own ponds with approved chemicals. Manufacturer-provided POP assistance has helped retailers and their customers find the right solutions to their aquatic weed issues without having to learn too much. With the increased emphasis on “green” solutions, natural treatments have become extremely popular with contractors and consumers alike. They’re easy to use and provide outstanding results in fixing fouled-up water.

With the right tools, time and time again our customers’ fears have quickly turned into confidence and resulted in terrific sales on a category that, in the past, was feared and ignored. That’s it. It’s so simple.

Not Much Business to be Had?

When questioned about the potential of this category, I usually start with the statement that there are over 8 million natural ponds in the U.S. alone, and the goal of each of those ponds is to eventually become a grass-land or prairie.

Or so it would seem. Most plants and algae growing in these bodies of water are considered invasive species and need consistent treatment so as to not take over the entire body of water. I often hear, “Yeah, but how many ponds are in our market?” That’s when I hop on to Google Earth or Google Maps and use satellite imagery to pull up images of ponds, usually locating dozens of ponds in a matter of minutes. Granted, there are parts of the U.S. that have more ponds than other parts, but there’s water everywhere. There are recreational rural ponds, decorative ponds, retention ponds, fire suppression ponds, golf course ponds, fish ponds … and all of them need to be managed. Once you find ample water in your market and decide to carry the category, the challenge is getting the word out that you now have solutions for ponds and lakes. If you’re a retailer, it helps to have at least one manufacturer-supported consumer seminar. These can typically bring 10 to 30 people to your store looking for solutions to their mess-ed-up water! These people are usually hungry for answers and solutions after years of dealing with the fruits of mismanaged ponds.

Profitability

Let’s talk profitability. This is definitely where the fun begins. Contractors begin salivating when I tell them that they can install a double diffuser system in a pond using about four or five man-hours and achieve gross profit margins of contractors and retailers, typically a manufacturer-supported consumer seminar. These can typically bring 10 to 30 people to your store looking for solutions to their mess-ed-up water! These people are usually hungry for answers and solutions after years of dealing with the fruits of mismanaged ponds.

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of approximately 40 percent, or about $1,200 … and that’s on the first installation, with no prior experience. You can only get better, and more profitable, from there.

It’s important for contractors or installers to find systems that are designed for easy installation, which are usually units that are mostly pre-assembled and require little, if any, digging to install. Also, the focus should be on installing complete systems, not individual components. System, not individual component, installations usually result in higher margins, better performance and much higher customer satisfaction, which can lead to the word-of-mouth advertising we all covet.

Retailers, on the other hand, have an opportunity to expand their product offerings with high-ticket and high-margin consumable products, as well as even higher-ticket aeration systems. The best part of selling aeration systems is that they can usually be sold as a special order, meaning retailers don’t have to stock these high-ticket items in their stores. It’s also best to look for items that are protected by a well-managed MAP (manufacturer’s advertised price) program, insulating you against Internet price erosion.

**Snapshot of Opportunity**

There’s so much to cover and so little space to do it in, but I hope that this brief snapshot of opportunity will help stimulate or inspire you to look further into this avenue of revenue.

**About the Author**

Rick Weidman is vice president of business development at Airmax Inc., a manufacturer of pond and lake aeration and natural treatments. After 20 years in retail, he began a second career in water garden sales in 1993 and has given several talks over the years on ways to grow sales and succeed in the business of water features, ponds and lakes. He still spends a good portion of his time training and educating consumers, contractors and retailers on solid water management practices.
I have devoted the better part of my life to studying wildlife and have always had a deep love and respect for nature. In my view, any critter that crawls, walks, swims or flies is interesting and belongs on Earth.

That was my belief until I met up with the Common Grackle (Quiscalus quiscula), or blackbird, of the Midwest. These birds and I simply cannot get along when it comes to water gardens. A grackle’s reason for visiting our water gardens is, plainly speaking, gross!

So just what is the problem? Simply put: fecal sacs! This is a sac consisting of a membrane that contains the feces of the bird’s young. When a young nestling Grackle defecates, it comes out contained in a nice little package. The parent birds have developed a practice of picking up this sac, flying off with it and depositing it in or near water. We have been so gracious in providing water in very convenient locations, but they will fly quite a distance carrying these sacs and neatly place them in a personal “deposit area” in, or on the rocks around, your water garden. Each deposit area can have dozens of white poop spots!

Young defecating in fecal sacs is common in other species of birds as well, but these other species do not necessarily carry the fecal sac to water. Grackles may deposit these sacs in areas away from water but I have not witnessed it. If water is close by, they will take these gifts to it. So, with grackles and ponds you have bird poop everywhere — the amount depends on the number of Grackle nests in your neighborhood.

Nesting Season

During the nesting season, Grackles most often nest in evergreen types of trees. If you have large evergreens in the eastern two thirds of the U.S. you will have Grackles nesting in them. Grackles are solid, glossy blackbirds with an iridescent purple sheen around the head. They are a common type of native bird and form huge flocks during migration, but during the nesting season they are territorial and spread out. There can be as many as a half dozen nests in a couple of acres. The parent birds make a fecal sac every fecal sac trip. Once this behavior is recognized, you can predict that a Grackle will show up regularly at its deposit area. It is relatively easy to get photos due to this type of consistent behavior. When the young get older and about ready to fledge, the parent birds make a fecal sac deposit in or near water to use as a ladder to help the young fly out of the nest.

You can easily determine the number of nests in the area by the number of “spots” where the fecal sacs are deposited.

These areas next to a water garden are the spots where a couple different pairs of grackles deposit their fecal sacs. This amount of poop is deposited every day. It is recommended to wash off these areas on a regular basis to maintain the beauty of the water garden.

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trip every three to 10 minutes depending on the number of young. They poop a lot as they get older, and those parent Grackles have their work cut out for them providing food and dutifully carrying away their diaper sacs.

So what can you do to prevent them from doing this? Nothing, really. You can’t prevent the behavior; you can only try to deal with the mess.

When I first suspected that the problem of these deposited bird droppings was not unique to my water gardens and those of my clients, I called a former professor of mine who is an avian ecologist. I asked him about this type of Grackle behavior and he had an interesting story to relate. He said that he once had a black-matted trampoline in his yard and the Grackles were depositing the fecal sacs on the surface of that shiny black mat — making a huge mess. He said that he initially thought they were putting them there due to the fact that the trampoline was “proximal” (near) to the nest and more convenient for them, so he moved the trampoline more “distant”

This series of photos shows a grackle with a fecal sac in its beak coming to water to dispose of it. After dropping the sac in the water, the bird gets a drink and washes its beak. (distant) and they still flew to it to drop their fecal sacs. Those were his words, and in more simple layman’s terms he thought it was too close to the nest so he moved it much farther away. After our conversation he and I came to the same conclusion: the shiny surface resembled water, and for lack of more convenient water, they chose the trampoline surface to drop off their little gifts.

I have since done my research and found out that almost every water gardener I know in the Midwest has this problem in the spring. It’s frustrating. I have even known some water gardeners who resort to shooting the birds, and that is sad due to the fact that they have babies back in the nest.

But Why?

So why do the birds do this? The behavior is an innate housekeeping practice that is not only hygienically smart, but helps avoid luring predators to their nests. Also, after the sacs are deposited the parent bird will “wash” its beak and then take a drink of water.

I have seen Grackles drop these sacs while flying over water. Koi seem to like the taste of them and drop them there. I believe that they were thinking the shiny vehicles were water, similar to the trampoline. All birds are creatures of habit and will fly the same route and land in relatively the same spot every fecal sac trip! With four to six babies in the nest, this can be a lot of white poop spots on your rocks — and this is for just one nest.

This amount of bird poop washing into your pond from the surrounding rocks, or from deposits directly into the pond, can create pea-green soup water. Of course, the amount depends on the size of the water garden and number of nests — and consequently, the number of fecal sacs deposited.

So what can you do to prevent them from doing this? Nothing, really. You can’t prevent the behavior; you can only try to deal with the mess. It only lasts for a month, and when the young fledge the nest the problem goes away. It’s unsightly around your pond, but it does wash off. Rain will eventually wash it away, but for a more active approach I recommend, on a regular basis, scrubbing the rocks around your pond and netting out the sacs that have been placed in the water. The sacs stay intact for a day or two in the water, unless the fish get to them and eat them first.

Now you know more than you ever wanted to know about Grackle poop and how it can affect your water garden. You can say now that you have read it all or

Male Grackles show a more blue iridescence on their heads than the females do, but they both have the reflective color. They are not all black. The male in this photo is on the left.

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No Quick Fix
Internet marketing overheads and rising costs

by John Olson, Graystone Industries

When it comes to website building and Internet marketing, myths and misconceptions abound. Installers, brick and mortar retail stores and manufacturers still frequently rely on dated information, rumors and false assumptions.

Perhaps the most absurd statement tossed around as fact: “Those who sell false assumptions rely on dated information, rumors and stores and manufacturers still frequently abound. Installers, brick and mortar retail of the situation is that Internet-based compete.” This constantly repeated myth has taken on a life of its own in spite of the exact opposite being true. The reality is woefully unprepared for.

A merchant account, a portal that allows customers to use their credit cards, typically runs $20 to $40 per month plus 2.9 percent per credit card transaction (or 3.5 to 4 percent for American Express).

Can I Build the Site Myself?
The 1989 baseball movie “Field of Dreams” made famous this popular quote: “Build it and they will come.” This cause became an early mantra for Internet marketing. 15 years ago, all one had to do was build a website, load in products and sit back and watch the money roll in. Unfortunately, that was then and this is now. Today, a successful ecommerce company must be willing to invest both time and money into the business. The way customers shop, the way search engines work and the way websites must be built and updated is constantly in flux. If you possess a great deal of patience, free time and willingness to learn, there is no reason you could not perform the work yourself. However, a top-level online retail store will have an average of about 500 web pages, with some having well over 3,000.

“I have about 4,000 hours in learning, research, testing and implementation work,” Davin Paul said. “That does not include everyday items such as customer service, issues, maintenance, et cetera.”

“When I first built my website I spent eight to 10 hours a day for about a month,” said Jon Loewy, owner of ncpond.com. “Now, eight years later, I have a little better understanding about how to build it ... and the site is undergoing what will be about a nine-month renovation.”

Some larger companies assign their associates to the website-building task, but they are good indicators of the procedures, options and expenses used by some of the nation’s top e-commerce experts.

Internet Services
The first steps in e-commerce are pretty simple and not too costly. Finding and registering an online domain (the address visitors type into their browsers to navigate to your website) can be done for as little as $12.99 per year on GoDaddy.com. Many companies will even provide one domain name registration for free if you purchase a hosting package.

Of course, once you have the domain you will need somewhere to host the website, a shopping cart into which you can enter your products and a merchant account through which you can process transactions. There are many choices available. Website hosting can be as cheap as $20 to $30 per year for the most basic services or $200 per year with good customer service. The shopping cart, which will allow your customers to purchase goods online, can be obtained for free if you have the technical ability to enter in the products yourself. (Search Google for free shopping carts.)
hour, but $60 to $80 does appear to be the norm. Based on a price of $50 per hour, a company should be prepared to make an initial investment of $7,500 to $10,000 for a 500- to 1,000-page website. Ongoing maintenance and changes should run as little as $10,000 per year with $20,000 for larger sites. No matter how high or low the rate may be, it is imperative that you check references for your web builder and ensure that the work they perform meets your vision for how your website should appear.

**Advertising and Marketing**

Over the last seven to 10 years there have been quite a few changes in the way consumers shop. Over time search engines have evolved to know a great deal more about consumers and have even more accurate results appear. The consumer today may do the search, “How do I build a backyard koi pond kit?” The results that are returned are factored in ways unheard of just a few years ago. The search engine knows the consumer’s location, the things he has searched for previously and if he is looking to buy products or if he only wants information. The results that are delivered to this specific person are not the same results that would be returned if you or I were to type in the exact same search query.

This type of search customization has made more work for a web retailer. Instead of loading a few keyword phrases into each page of a website, a merchant must now consider a more overall advertising and marketing plan. This plan may still include some on-page optimization but will most likely want to consider a whole host of “social media” aspects. Advertising platforms such as Google AdWords, regular and online magazine ads, Google Shopping, Bing Ads (formerly Microsoft adCenter), Groupon and more will put your site in front of millions of people — but at a charge. Blogs, press releases, industry-specific forums, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn and other sharing sites will give your website exposure at no upfront cost — but a considerable amount of time and effort are needed to achieve results.

Shopping networks like Amazon, eBay, Sears and Rakuten will allow you to offer your goods to their extensive customer bases, but they will charge a varying percentage for doing so. Amazon charges a flat 15 percent of every purchase amount (even shipping) and eBay runs 8 to 12 percent depending upon your item cost and your discount level with them.

Advertising and marketing costs will vary from site to site depending upon what you decide to pursue. Although the initial cash outlay may be lower for new sites, the percentage to sales is probably going to be a lot higher. For example, a brand new shopping site may spend as much as $150 to $200 on advertising to yield their first $300 in sales. On the other hand, an established website like relaxingdecor.com, owned by Pedro Gonzalez, may spend higher amounts but have a lower percentage of cost. “In 2013 I will end up with just over $15,000 in advertising,” Gonzalez said. With sales on that site hitting about $200,000 per month, $15,000 in marketing is a far more favorable percentage.

Other sites’ advertising and marketing costs will vary greatly. Eric Triplet, owner of Thepondsolution.com, is currently reinventing his company’s website business. “I have paid up to $2,000 per month for pay-per-click advertising,” Triplet said. “$1,500 for the online store and $500 for my construction business.” Knowing how quickly the market is changing, Eric has just hired a marketing coordinator to help him out in all the new social sharing and marketing decisions. This associate will cost his company $30,000 per year but has the potential to create infinitely more in sales. Eric has also heavily invested in placing videos on YouTube and his efforts have resulted in tens of thousands of people learning about his company.

Graystonecreations.com, owned by this author, had total advertising costs across all mediums of $154,541.46 in 2012 and expects 2013 to end with a slightly higher number.

Advertising and marketing, like most of the topics discussed here, have a wide variety of costs. Companies with deep pockets often invest heavily in advertising and marketing to gain the most market share possible. Website retailers just starting out may find success in the free — but time-consuming — world of content creation and social media sharing.

**Shipping**

Shipping products to your customers can run from 1/3 to 20 percent of your total sales. With most consumers used to free shipping on their online purchases, this amount can add up fast. A random survey of six popular online companies found that their shipping costs can be anywhere from $83,000 to over $250,000 annually. Additionally, many manufacturers offer a drop shipping feature, but most of them charge Internet operators a higher price and often a fee of $5 to $10 per order. On the other hand, those who choose to buy and stock the products themselves are faced with tens or even hundreds of orders per month. Finding the right balance between stocking items and having a distributor or manufacturer ship for you is important.

To build or not to build?

As someone who operates Internet sites and local stores and supplies dealers and contractors across the country, I know firsthand that it is difficult to keep on top of the ever-changing market. The costs have certainly increased exponentially over the last decade and it is easy to be discouraged by the extra amount of time and effort needed to achieve a successful online business. Quite a few online retailors now find themselves in the same quandary that brick and mortar stores did when web-based shopping became popular. If a company were to believe the industry myth that online sellers have no overhead and attempt to “throw together” a website, they will be greatly disappointed with the results. To be clear, my own company, Graystone Industries, could open seven different physical locations that are fully staffed and fully stocked and have less overhead per year.

Company owners who wish to expand their customer base and are willing to commit to properly building, advertising and marketing their online stores can still achieve much success. Like any other business decision, owners must gather information to fully understand the processes and costs involved. They must create business plans and they must work daily to achieve their goals.

**Final Thoughts**

In the course of interviewing merchants for this article, it was surprising to learn that several companies felt that if they were starting out today they would choose not to open an online store. Some felt that it takes too much work, too much learning and too much money — and there is too much competition today compared to when they started.

However, Steve Blessing of Pondandgar- denpower.com had a much different outlook.

“We are barely past the ‘Model T years’ for e-commerce in my opinion,” Steve said. “The potential for growth is huge and largely untapped. It will take more knowledge to be competitive but that is the nature of any growing field or industry.”

From purchasing your domain to perfecting an advertising or marketing program, there are countless tasks involved in building a retail website. Today, the world operates at breakneck speed with new technologies emerging weekly. Consumer purchasing continues to evolve just as rapidly, and what worked six years ago — or sometimes just six months ago — is no longer relevant.

Social media and information sharing are shaping the minds and the buying decisions of our customers. To launch an effective website, one must be ready to continually change and adapt as the market does. Those who fail to adapt will one day soon find themselves out of business. Those owners who keep pace with the changing market will see their businesses continue to grow and prosper.
I n Japanese, the word Hikari means metallic, while Muji means plain or solid. Thus, it shouldn’t be surprising that Hikari Muji is a beautiful variety of koi with a metallic body but no color pattern.

The major varieties of Hikari Muji include Ogon, Plachina (platinum), Aka Matsuba Ogon, Gin Matsuba, and more. The metallic bodies of Matsuba Ogon and Gin Matsuba display patterns similar to a pine cone. However, these pine cones are not really color patterns, like Kohaku displays. Rather, they are a kind of scale pattern. So these Matsuba varieties belong to this group as well.

The most important varieties of Hikari Muji are definitely Ogon and Plachina. Their importance lies not only in the fact that they are new varieties, but also in their role as the foundation of even more varieties.

Aka Matsuba Ogon, Gin Matsuba, Ogon and Plachina were crossed with other patterned varieties to produce a lot more new varieties, such as Hariwake, Yamato Nishiki, Gin Shiro Utsuri, and others. These patterned metallic varieties are related to Hikari Moyo, which I will cover in the next issue, and Hikari Utsuri, which I have covered in the past.

Basic Beauty

The striking simplicity of Hikari Muji

Pattern

The most important varieties of Hikari Muji are definitely Ogon and Plachina. Their importance lies not only in the fact that they are new varieties, but also in their role as the foundation of even more varieties.

History

Mr. Sawata Aoki developed the first Ogon. After finding a carp with some metallic shine in a river, he had dreamed about breeding a whole golden-bodied koi. He finally developed it in 1947, about 30 years later. Comparing to what we see nowadays, it is not as golden. But it was definitely an epoch-making creation.

Plachina was developed by Tadao Yoshioka in 1963 by crossing Nezu Ogon and Akame Kigoi.

Characteristics

Because Hikari Muji has no color pattern, other facets of its look become far more important. When appreciating this beautiful variety, consider the following:

1) Body

Going back to the basics of koi appreciation, three important factors that determine the beauty of koi are body, quality and pattern, in that order. Because this variety of koi does not have any color pattern, the importance of body conformation is great. As you may know, Ogon is especially known for big appetites. They eat a lot and tend to grow big quickly and build great body conformation.

2) Sheen

Because this Hikari Muji is metallic, the strength of its shine is the life of the koi. When breeders cull fries, removing less-than-ideal fish from the gene pool, this is the first thing they look at. Any dull shine will be eliminated right away. It is ideal to have the strong and constant shine from the face through the tail. It may be difficult to tell the quality of sheen when they are small. Please look at the head and the pectoral fins, selecting ones with head and fins that shine strongly.

3) Fukurin

Fukurin is a netting pattern formed by gaps between koi scales. When koi are small, all their scales are tightly laid out. There are no gaps. But as koi grow larger — especially when they grow quickly, like Ogon does — the scales start to grow more slowly in relation to the growth of the body. That is when gaps begin to show, and those gaps become Fukurin! Because Hikari Muji do not have actual scale color patterns, Fukurin is one of the few highlights of the variety. How well it appears greatly impacts the value of Hikari Muji like Ogon.

In the past, Fukurin was seen only on a few varieties, like Ogon, because only Ogon can grow big so quickly. Now, however, we see Fukurin on most varieties. On other varieties, if there are no Fukurin, it does not mean the fish are of lower quality. If there are, it will simply add extra value to the koi. This is a very important term and concept. If you have not known it yet, I strongly recommend you learn at this opportunity.

Selling Hikari Muji

Everybody must have at least one Ogon and one Plachina. So selling those metallic koi may not be difficult. When handling small koi, be sure to explain the importance of sheen.
fish’s bodies all look the same, and Fukurin will not be visible yet. But when handling medium to large size koi, the body conformation and Fukurin come to play for your sales talk. Because body and Fukurin heavily rely on bloodlines, please make sure you buy those from the trusted breeders.

Breeding these simple koi looks easy, so I am sure that many domestic and foreign breeders produce them. But I think that no varieties are as difficult to breed as Hikari Muji. Because its look is so simple, any small flaw — like a small Hi spot or minor disorder of scales — will impact its beauty right away. These small flaws will not be seen when they are small, but as the koi grow, they will come out. This is another reason why I so greatly stress the importance of bloodline. Bloodline is the only thing that assures the future quality of koi.

As for Ogon, the number-one bloodline comes from Izumiya, a breeder in Niigata, Japan. His Ogon has won Best in Variety at the All Japan Koi Show many times. As for Plachina, there are several breeders. Yamacho Koi Farm is probably the best place to go.

With this knowledge, you’ll be able to appreciate Hikari Muji in a whole new way.

About the Author

Taro Kodama is president of Kodama Koi Farm. It is the largest importer and distributor of quality Japanese koi in the U.S. With locations in Japan, Hawaii, New York and New Jersey, Kodama Koi Farm carries over 35,000 Japanese koi from the top breeders in Japan. Taro Kodama, along with his father, Mamoru Kodama, not only provide winning show koi, but they also conduct many koi seminars.
Fish ponds are first and foremost about the needs of the fish. Koi need lots of dissolved oxygen, good circulation and good filtration. Whether they are backyard koi or show koi, they have the same basic physical needs. Goldfish have basic physical needs too, but they seem to be able to handle worse conditions — mainly because of their smaller size. Goldfish are much more prolific breeders, though, and tend to get overpopulated at a much faster rate than koi. For this reason we will focus on the needs of koi in this list of rules.

3 feet
This is my minimum depth for building a pond. 
- Birds of prey such as the Blue Heron have long legs for a reason. They can stand completely still in a body of water until the fish forget they are there and then pluck them out easily when they swim near. 
- A deeper pond prevents that from happening. 
- Sunlight affects 100 percent of the water down to about two feet. By building a pond deeper than two feet, you give the system a cushion of water unaffected by sunlight.
- Volume is your friend. Deeper water gives you more volume in the same footprint, and a larger volume of water stays more stable in volume unaffected by sunlight.
- Shallower areas, including plant shelves or steps for safety, can stand completely still in a body of water until the fish forget they are there. 
- At the same time, we must consider that the hobby of koi-keeping has extremes. On one end, we have the hobbyist who has fish in it. On the other end, we have the koi keeper who owns expensive, show-quality fish. For our purposes here, we will only discuss ponds with fish because the requirements for water gardens without fish are much lower and can be in a category by themselves.

5 to 10 percent
This is the ratio of filtration to total pond volume. 
- A pond with good quality filtration and maximum dissolved oxygen content can get away with filtration in the five to seven percent range. This is a case where more is better. 
- Pressurized biofilters consume oxygen and are sealed, so when using them always allow for additional oxygen somewhere in the system. It’s my opinion that most pressurized filter manufacturers over-rate their equipment, so I cut their performance numbers by one third to one half when I have to use them.

4 to 6 feet
This is the average radius, around the drain, of a four-inch gravity flow bottom drain flowing approximately 3,600 GPH can effectively service. 
- A three-inch drain line is half of that and so on. I have built several very small ponds with two-inch gravity flow drains, but they don’t work well. 
- These days, even on small ponds, I stop at three-inch drains. They are easier to maintain, and with the lower flow rates of small ponds, they need more maintenance and cleaning — which is much easier with a three-inch drain than a two-inch. 
- On ponds that are direct suction straight to a pump, you just go by the flow rate. I don’t recommend direct suction without a pre-filter other than the pump’s leaf trap, because it is dangerous to the fish and requires much more pump maintenance.

3,600 GPH
This is the volume I give to an average four-inch gravity flow line. 
- A four-inch gravity flow bottom drain, skimmer or mid-water line will flow approximately 3,600 GPH of water when the water level in the tank it is flowing to is approximately one inch lower than the surface of the pond. 
- Water seeks its own level. As a pump removes water from a pre-filter tank or other filter, the water in the tank will drop and the water in the pond or previous tank will try to equalize back to the original level. When it reaches approximately one inch lower than its static starting level, the water flowing into the tank from the pond to replace it will reach this rate excluding any pipe friction head. The shorter the pipe the better. A longer pipe will necessarily flow a little slower because of increased pipe friction.
- Consequently, a three-inch pipe with half the cross-sectional area will flow approximately 1,800 GPH. 
- A two-inch pipe will flow approximately 900 GPH and a 1.5-inch pipe will flow approximately 450 GPH.

200 gallons
The minimum volume of water on average adult koi needs to adequately survive over its lifetime. Anything below this is the number at which a pond begins to be overstocked.
- Overstocking leads to unhealthy and diseased fish.
- The larger the fish, the more volume it needs. Many serious show-quality koi owners typically run 1,000 to 2,000 gallons per adult fish.

1,000 GPH per linear foot
This is the minimum number of GPH required to make a waterfall or spill look good. A one-foot-wide waterfall needs at least 1,000 GPH, while a two-foot-wide waterfall needs at least 2,000 GPH, and so on.

2,100 GPH per amp
This is the rate at which the most efficient pumps on the market move water at a head of approximately four feet. 
- Many manufacturers list various head heights for their pumps, which makes it confusing to compare. It would be much easier if all manufacturers rated their pumps on a standard of three or four feet (head), since that is the typical range of waterfall heights. 
- Waterfall or spill height above pond level (static head) alone is not the deciding factor in measuring total head. Pipe friction or “dynamic head” is a part of the equation, but it’s much more difficult to calculate so I don’t. I typically build with proper pipe diameters and use pipe runs as short as possible, then add 10 to 15 percent to my static head.
- This does not include the use of pressurized filtration systems. Pressurized systems require a lot more head, or “pressure.” The manufacturers of pressurized equipment are breaking in willingness to issue flow charts similar to the ones used by pump manufacturers to rate their equipment. Pressurized filters should have ratings that express the amount of head in relation to the flow through the filter.

March/April 2014
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1 to 2 times per hour

The average turnover rate of total pond water:

- The turnover rate is defined as the number of times the total volume of pond water flows through filtration in one hour.
- This generally does not include water that is bypassed directly back to the pond past the filtration system. This is a little bit of a gray area, though, because some bypass water can be used for very useful purposes: current flow, for instance, or aerating not involved in filtration, such as a waterfall or feature without a filter.
- Smaller ponds need a higher turnover rate than larger ponds. Things happen faster in a small pond, and smaller ponds are usually more likely to be overstocked. Small ponds are also less stable, as their temperature fluctuates more. It’s more difficult to make both a skimmer and a bottom drain work well on a flow of less than about 2,400 gallons per hour (or GPH). For me, this means that a 1,000-gallon pond will have a turnover rate of about 2.4 times per hour.
- Typically my larger ponds run approximately 1.5 times per hour, all through filtration.
- Extremely large ponds and small lakes can run much lower rates and the rules apply much differently.
- The higher the dissolved oxygen content, the lower the turnover rate can be. Oxygen is your friend.

630 GPH

This is the maximum rate of flow for one square foot of cross-sectional surface area for a static trapping biofilter.

- Biofilters are in two basic categories: Static Trapping and Aerated. Static trapping biofilters house your bacterial colonies but also trap fine solids for water clarity. Aerated biofilters don’t trap any solids but have a higher rate of ammonia conversion. Consequently, aerated biotifiers have no speed limit as opposed to static trapping filters.
- Running static trapping filters at a higher rate prevents them from doing the best job they can at trapping. When trapping fine particles, slower is better.
- The number of biofilters needed for a specific pond is directly related to the volume and turnover rate. I try to use both types whenever possible.

1,000 GPH per linear foot

This is the minimum number of GPH required to make a waterfall or spill look good. A one-foot-wide waterfall needs a flow of at least 1,000 GPH, while a two-foot-wide waterfall needs at least 2,000 GPH, and so on.

7,000 GPH per amp

This is the approximate amount of flow per amp through filtration with a properly designed system run with air-lifts.

- These systems are relatively new to the pond world, but I regularly build and use them. They have their pros and cons, though.
- On an air lift system cannot run a waterfall or any equipment that requires much head or suction.

Kent Wallace was born and raised in Las Vegas, Nev. and spent most of his adult life in the automobile industry. Then, in 2001, a neighbor asked Kent if he could build her a koi pond like she saw his father build.

From that point on pond building became his new passion. The first pond he built was submitted to Better Homes & Gardens Magazine and won Best Courtyard Nationwide in their special interest publication.

William Lim of W. Lim Corp. was his mentor and provided his first introduction to filtration systems. From this beginning Kent formed his own company, Living Water Solutions Inc., which has expanded from pond construction to production manufacturing, consulting and design.
One Voice for the Koi

by MaryEllen Malinowski,
The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary & Japanese Gardens

It doesn’t take much to be the difference. It just takes a deep breath and a commitment to do what is right. The koi needed a voice, and it seemed that in an unforeseen moment, the Koi Whisperer was revealed. Today, The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary & Japanese Gardens has developed into an international Nishikigoi Zen Living design center, including a new retail living gallery specifically designed for the sale of imported Japanese koi, a retail store, and a design studio for Japanese Gardens — including a library for clients and guests. With the extraordinary success of the Koi Whisperer’s Adopt a Koi and Kids for Koi programs, the koi are being recognized and the hobby itself is being transformed into a deep and meaningful responsibility and lifestyle. People travel to the center, located on two acres on the Fox River in St. Charles, Ill., because they care about the koi, ... and that is what is making the difference. We welcome visitors and Koi Keepers from across the globe and last year enjoyed guests from England, Turkey and Japan.

Humble Beginnings: A Single Koi Rescued

In 2010, I had been working with my own koi that I imported from Japan for five years when I began to see that people were frustrated in the keeping of their koi. I was running a full-time fine art photography gallery, and as a Japanese Garden designer, I was working on my property — which included a courtyard pond and a 600-gallon interior koi pond. Several photography collectors began to tell their friends that I had koi, and the fine art collectors soon became living art buyers that wanted me to import high-grade koi for them from Japan. It was not until I was volunteering my time at a retail garden center that everything changed. Everything.

It was known by many Koi Keepers that I had a deep understanding of koi and an extensive background in Japanese design. One morning, I had arrived at Aquascape to take care of the koi when an employee alerted me that there had been a terrible accident. Koi had been jumping out of their tanks during the night! Upon opening the bin where the escaped koi were disposed, I noticed something. The first one, lying on top of all the dead koi, had something about it that told me instinctively that it was alive. I immediately went into a rescue mode and worked to revive the koi.

This koi was beautiful. A blue and white Kumonryu about 17 inches in length, it was an extraordinary beauty. I was focusing totally on him until I realized that customers were arriving and beginning to gather around me, watching me work on the koi.

45 minutes later, the koi began to show life and was able to hold its own body weight in an upright position. Meanwhile, I continued to talk to the koi and force aeration into its gill plates.

Then I heard the voice of a woman telling people, “She’s a Koi Whisperer.” The crowd continued to grow, and nearly two hours later, the koi was swimming happily in the bowl when I set him free in their large pond.

From that day on, the people came looking for me, even leaving notes on my door at my home: “Koi Whisperer, I need your help with my koi.”

The Koi Whisperer

I did not go searching for this mission. It came to me. I have an amazing connection with the koi, the same communicative energy that I have when working with infrared light. It is beyond the visible. It is at a deeper level. It is my honor and privilege to help these beautiful creatures that have no voice.

As ripples on top of water spread across the surface, so did the work that I was doing for the koi. I traveled through-out the United States and England for my studies and documentary photography work, visiting the San Francisco Japanese Tea Gardens and the Portland Japanese Gardens in Oregon. Each and every day the koi calls kept coming. The koi needed help and so did their keepers. The fine art photography gallery, design studio and darkroom were slowly packed away as more room was needed to care for the koi.

Looking back over the past four years, I realize that it’s not that there are people in the koi industry who do not have the same knowledge that I have. I am no different; it is just that I have a mission and a determination to speak for what is right for the koi.

Speaking for the Koi

First, do no harm. I began to ask the right questions, and was determined to give the koi the proper water environment that they needed to live happy and healthy lives. Water is the key to keeping koi, and if that means that stones need to be removed from the bottom of the pond, and I am the one who is willing...
From 2010 until today, I have rescued over 1,200 koi in need. “Koi quarantined, healed and adopted into new home ponds” has become the essence of the sanctuary. From 2010 until today, I have rescued over 1,200 koi in need. “Koi quarantined, healed and adopted into new home ponds” has become the essence of the sanctuary. From 2010 until today, I have rescued over 1,200 koi in need. "Koi quarantined, healed and adopted into new home ponds" has become the essence of the sanctuary.

into new home ponds has become the essence of the sanctuary. Every koi that has needed medical attention has been documented, and we have a proven record of conditions that were positive or negative to the lifestyle of the koi. I have been called out to tragedies such as chemical poisoning, koi released in sewers, koi struck by lightning — we even retrieved hundreds of babies from a filtration system. It was my greatest honor to rescue Colonel, the famous 19-year-old koi that graced the Fabyan Japanese Gardens in Geneva, Ill., from frozen waters. Through sun and rain, we rescue koi large and small, domestic and imported … even koi that were attacked by predators and needed assistance. One koi at a time.

The Koi Whisperer koi rescues have also been successful for many koi in other states, thanks to volunteers who have dedicated their time and compassion to do the rescue work. From the winter of 2012 to the spring of 2013, we cared for 427 rescued koi that were housed here throughout the winter and 10 koi in our Winter Koi Spa Housing for koi that needed to be brought inside for the winter. Every koi was cared for and improved, both in health and friendliness, due to the dedication and the mission set in place here at The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary. Last year, we saw our lowest drop in koi rescue calls for sick koi, thanks to the success of educating the Koi Keepers on our Holistic Koi Care and the responsibility that we have to do what is right for the koi.

Since we have partnered with The International Nishikigoi Promotional Center in Japan, the stories are kept alive on the history and legacy of the koi and the Japanese koi breeders. This privilege includes public lectures for groups such as the Eastern Iowa Pond Society, Northern Illinois International Pond and Water Garden Society and Fabyan Japanese Gardens in Ill. It is my greatest honor to have received a personal letter from the President of INPS in Japan, thanking me for my service and dedication to the koi. This year I look forward to the opportunity to travel to the Netherlands, Belgium and soon, Japan.

Global Whispers

The tale of the Koi Whisperer continues to inspire and reach thousands of people and children across the globe. In the awareness of each and every koi — whether it is a Showa from a rescue that needs to be adopted or a grade 4 imported Ginrin Kohaku that was selected for a client — each koi is respected and treated the same. To me, it is not all about making money, but rather that I give with the heart — that we not only serve our clients, but also give attention and service to the koi, for the koi. I believe in...
An imported Showa koi (left) shows off her beauty at the new Nishikigoi Gallery (right) at the Koi Whisperer Sanctuary.

transparency within this industry ... that the stories told to the clients and the facts that are given should include a natural, organic and holistic approach to the koi’s diet and their home pond care, as opposed to chemical dependency. Education is the key, and in this awareness, the koi will have a voice. This has inspired hundreds of children with our Kids for Koi program in the schools, which educates, inspires and enlightens kids through the enjoyment and experience of koi. The approach to taking care of the koi takes care of the whole, too — and that is the core of Zen Living.

The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary has a newly designed Nishikigoi Gallery, a living art gallery that has taken imported Japanese koi selection to a higher level. I am thrilled to be importing Karasigos, which is a variety that is not common here in the United States but is known to be the friendliest of koi. In my appreciation of koi as treasured jewels, my interpretation of Nishikigoi as truly living art has raised the bar as to the presentation of koi as treasured jewels, my interpretation of Nishikigoi as truly living art gallery of koi. The expert knowledge and contributions given by these men are immeasurable and I am so very grateful for their time, dedication and generosity in the donations that they have given to make this dream a reality for the koi. As The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary & Japanese Gardens in St. Charles, Ill., as she is called, is a koi importer/broker for Nishikigoi and inspires people with her Koi Whisperer® Adopt a Koi and Kids for Koi programs throughout the world.

M is the owner of Infrared Light International, a lifestyle design company that enlightens, educates and empowers clients to connect with living an extraordinary life based on the simple elements of nature, water, light and tranquility. M is an international award-winning fine art photographer, author and Japanese Garden designer. M can be found blogging for Chicago Now and is the publisher of her upcoming magazine, Zen Living by design.

About the Author
Mary Ellen Malinowski is the founder and executive director of The Koi Whisperer Sanctuary & Japanese Gardens in St. Charles, Ill., as she is called, is a koi importer/broker for Nishikigoi and inspires people with her Koi Whisperer® Adopt a Koi and Kids for Koi programs throughout the world.

If you have managed a business where you had hiring responsibilities, you know the importance of having the strongest possible team of employees working with you. It doesn’t matter if you are building a team for executive leadership, an efficient warehouse crew, an office staff, sales support or any other department team; hiring the right or wrong people will impact your business success.

“Hires remorse” — the feeling you get when a hire who interviewed well but cannot, as you discover later, do the job — has grown in numbers as companies recognize the importance of getting it right the first time has increased dramatically. Mistakes are costly. The built resume and the candidate’s ability to present him or herself well, although important and valued, are no longer at the top of my list of “must-have” attributes. In today’s world, I first look for evidence, examples of a strong work ethic and a teachable spirit.

Good Candidate vs. Great Employee
Lou Adler of The Adler Group has made the case that most hiring processes were inadvertently designed to find good candidates, not great employees. Candidates who are great at presenting themselves might not be so great at actually doing the work or fitting into your company’s culture.

The power of the One-Question Interview
The key to Lou Adler’s One-Question Interview is to ask the candidate to describe a major project or accomplishment in great depth. Then dig into the story to find out the facts about when, where, why, who and so on. Those who have the attributes you are looking for will become enthusiastic, and those who are just great presenters will become very uncomfortable with the follow-up questions.

“I love it when the candidate I’m interviewing has participated in sports, band, theater or other activities that require commitment and hard work to achieve excellence. And my interest piques with veterans. I also look for those who took leadership roles in key projects, whether it was in high school, college or professionally. If they don’t bring it up, I ask.

The key, then, is to compare what the person has accomplished and how he or she accomplished it to what is required in the open position.

For more information on Lou Adler and his interviewing process, visit http://www.adlerrecruiting.com. Wishing you the best in 2014, and I look forward to your feedback.

by Rick Smith, EasyPro Pond Products

For many years, I have been able to significantly increase my ability to hire great team members by incorporating one of Lou’s interviewing tools: the One-Question Interview. But before I share this technique, let me share other characteristics and attributes to look for in potential new team members.

Years ago, my interviewing skills were averages, but now I have a much stronger technique. The screening process has become more challenging and the importance of getting it right the first time has increased dramatically. The built resume and the candidate’s ability to present himself or herself well, although important and valued, are no longer at the top of my list of “must-have” attributes. In today’s world, I first look for evidence, examples of a strong work ethic and a teachable spirit.

Positive Attitude Void of Ego: A positive attitude is required to build an effective team. Usually, positive people are also good team players. Since “egos are always hungry,” they get in the way of team efforts and create conflict. It only takes one negative team member to become a cancer to the whole organization.

Strong Work Ethic: I want to be confident that when the learning curve or the requirements of the position become challenging, the new hire will have the inner commitment to rise to the challenge. A history of a strong work ethic usually indicates he or she is more likely to be reliable as well.

Teachable Spirit: If everyone on the team is committed to being a student of the business and learning a better way, the efficiencies of that team grow rapidly. Working with those who are not teachable is like driving with the brakes on.

The key to Lou Adler’s One-Question Interview is to ask the candidate to describe a major project or accomplishment in great depth. Then dig into the story to find out the facts about when, where, why, who and so on. Those who have the attributes you are looking for will become enthusiastic, and those who are just great presenters will become very uncomfortable with the follow-up questions.

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The Round Table

POND Trade Magazine March/April 2014
Hashtag This!

The Twitterization of Facebook
A new way for pond businesses to promote

by Joe Dysart

Pond industry businesses looking to join in on highly specific conversations happening on Facebook now have an easy way to get there: the new Facebook. Essentially, Facebook allows anyone to categorize a conversation they’re having on the social network by using a simple hashtag (#) and keyword in their post.

Log onto Facebook and type #PondSupplies in Facebook’s search box, for example, and you’ll be presented with all the posts on Facebook coded with that hashtag/keyword.

Got something to say about the topic? Simply write a post that includes #PondSupplies, and voila: your company is now part of the conversation.

Hashtags make it easy to find, follow and join online conversations about the topics that you care about,” says Lauren Thomas, campaign manager of Digital Sherpa, a Web marketing firm.

Hashtags were popularized by Twitter, which in a few years has risen from obscurity to one of the most active and influential social networks on the Web. Currently, there are countless conversations occurring on Twitter, all neatly organized with the hashtag/keyword system that Facebook has now adopted.

The major difference between the two is that Facebook posts coded with hashtags are not, as they are on Twitter, limited to 140 characters. Indeed, Facebook currently allows posts to be 63,206 characters in length, which includes any images. This represents a major advantage for Facebook, especially among the significant percentage of Web users who are more comfortable expressing themselves using much more than the stingy 140-character splurge of text allowed by Twitter.

Even better: Facebook is also allowing businesses to add hashtags to the ads they run on Facebook. So if you include #DiscountPondSupplies in your Facebook ad, and someone on Facebook is searching for it, they’ll be presented with your ad in Facebook search results.

“This will allow advertisers to target more active fans who are actively discussing something, rather than just belonging to a grouping or having liked a certain page at some point in the past,” says Ben Harper, social data and insight manager at Zazzle, a Web marketing agency.

Adds Karyn with a Y, a blogger for Click By Click Social Media, a social media marketing agency: “By adding a hashtag to your post you are making it viewable for anyone who searches for that subject — even if they aren’t a fan of your page or already connected with you. This gives you the opportunity to access a whole new audience, and you know they are interested in your topic because they have searched for it.”

Once you get the hang of using hashtags on Facebook, you’ll also be able to leverage the same concept on other social networks that use hashtags to organize conversations, including Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, Google+, Orkut, Diaspora, Tout, FriendFeed, Flickr, Vine and Gawker.

Here are some best practices for hashtag use on Facebook and other social networks, as recommended by social media specialists:

■ Get a quick overview on hashtags: The free “Quick Start Guide to Hashtags” offers an excellent strategy for getting the most promotional benefit from hashtags. Visit http://www.hashtags.org/quick-start.

■ Identify which hashtags work best: By using Facebook’s free analytics tool, Insights, you’ll be able to track which hashtags are most effective. Simply click on the “Reach” column in Insights and study which posts are getting the highest “reach,” or reads.

■ Use hashtags for branding and selling: You can assign a hashtag to describe your entire pond business presence on Facebook, or a specific product or service.

■ Piggyback on trending Facebook hashtags: Facebook now includes a “Trending” box in the upper right corner of your Facebook page,
Find a way to piggyback your pond business on a trending topic, and your post could be seen by hundreds — or even millions. 

- Use both capitalization and lowercase for hashtag phrases: Don’t use #thisisnoteasytoread. Instead use #ThisIsMuchEasierToRead.
- Don’t spam: Sure, it’s tempting to sign up for hashtag analytics service that continually tracks the most popular hashtags trending on Twitter. For maximum exposure, pond industry businesses can choose hashtags that are already trending, users who are interested in specific subjects, particularly locally focused and relevant ones will find a company’s social content much easier. Visit http://www.hashtags.org/trending-on-twitter.

Get network-specific guidance

There are a number of guides for hashtag use on a variety of social networks, including how to use hashtags on:

- Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/help/587836257914341
- Twitter: http://support.twitter.com/entries/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols
- Google+: https://support.google.com/plus/answer/3120322?hl=en
- Instagram: http://blog.instagram.com/post/17674993957/instagram-tips-using-hashtags
- Pinterest: http://www.hashtags.org/howto/marketing/howto/using-hashtags-on-pinterest
- Flickr: http://www.hashtags.org/news/and-now-comes-flickr/
- There are a number of guides for hashtag use on a variety of social networks, including how to use hashtags on:

Don’t forget the photos: Any Facebook post — including those with photos — can be coded with a hashtag. Don’t forget to include a photo with your post, if at all possible.

- Avoid special characters: Generally speaking, special characters (%^&) don’t work with hashtags.
- Don’t spam: Sure, it’s tempting to promote your pond business by including the hashtag #LadyGaga in your promotional post. But in the end, you’ll most likely only tick off a bunch of Lady Gaga fans, and perhaps have to wipe a bunch of glitter off your store windows the next day.

- Bring in a pro: Hashtags.org offers a paid analytics service that continually tracks the most popular hashtags trending on Twitter. For maximum exposure, pond industry businesses can choose hashtags that are already trending, users who are interested in specific subjects, particularly locally focused and relevant ones will find a company’s social content much easier. Visit http://www.hashtags.org/trending-on-twitter.

THE PARACHUTE SKIMMER™ COLLECTION NET

The Parachute Skimmer™ nets skin, capture and clean algae, watermeal, duckweed, leaves, and debris from the surface and below the surface as they are pulled through the water. US Patent 7,972,504

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- Google+: https://support.google.com/plus/answer/3120322?hl=en
- Instagram: http://blog.instagram.com/post/17674993957/instagram-tips-using-hashtags
- Pinterest: http://www.hashtags.org/howto/marketing/howto/using-hashtags-on-pinterest
- Flickr: http://www.hashtags.org/news/and-now-comes-flickr/
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Lifegard® Uno, Duo, Trio® Pond Filters

Lifegard Aquatics has introduced a redesigned line of submersible pond filters combining Biological and Mechanical filtration to remove pollutants from pond water.

The long-lasting Mechanical Spongest Filters are easily cleaned, while the Biological Media is safely contained inside sturdy material. Available in single, double and triple models, the Uno untreated to 1,000 gallons, the DUO up to 1,500 gallons and the TRIO up to 2,000 gallons. Units can be used with any make of pump and feature the ability to increase filter capacity by adding an additional cartridge unit to UNO and DUO sizes. In addition, DIY customers can insert a Quiet One® 2200, 3000 or 4000 Pump as well as install a 13-watt UV Sterilizer Kit. Complete UNO, DUO, TRIO Pond Filter Kits are also available from Lifegard® which include a Quiet One® Pump, Water Feature Spray Device and ability to add the UV Sterilizer Kit if needed.

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Little Giant Offers New Disappearing Fountain Kits

Bubbling water and minimal maintenance. The new Disappearing Fountains from Little Giant are available in a variety of shapes and colors. Modern, inexpensive and easy to assemble, these fountains will offer a relaxing, calming atmosphere to your home, garden or patio. They are quickly installed by a DIYer or a professional and they can be added to an existing project.

Sold individually or in a kit that includes a lightweight, durable resin construction, 31” tall Papyrus Fountain or 30” round lotus bowl, basin, pump and plumbing. Enhance your design with waterproof LED lighting that is also available through Little Giant.

For more information visit our website at www.lg-outdoor.com

Ewing Employees Run in Arizona Marathon for Tenth Year and Win 2014 Rock Corporate Challenge

Ewing employees finished the 2014 P.F. Chang’s Rock ’n’ Roll Arizona Marathon and Half Marathon on Jan. 19. Team Ewing had over 700 participants from 25 states, earning the team first place in the Rock Corporate Challenge Corporate Large Division, a friendly competition that encourages companies to train for the half or full marathon.

“We encourage fitness as health care costs continue to rise, and to create healthier and happier employees,” said Ewing president Doug York.

Team Ewing surpassed its goal this year of raising $25,000 for Autism Speaks, with runners raising $30,000 and Ewing donating an additional $20,000, for a total of $50,000 to Autism Speaks.

Rave Reviews for the New HS2.4S Tsurumi Pump

Never before has there been such a capable clean-out pump for the pond and water feature industry. Tsurumi Pumps is proud to introduce the HS2.4S with Residue Kit.

It recently hit the shelves of Tsurumi distributors and has received rave reviews from all over the country. It is a solids-handling clean-out and dewatering pump that has been designed for durability, longevity, and capability.

It has a 1 HP motor, 2” discharge, handles ¾” solids, will flow up to 3,300 GPH, and with the Residue Kit can pump down to under ½ of water.

The 45-degree discharge is perfect to minimize kinks in discharge hoses, which are also available from Tsurumi. The urethane impeller is incredibly tough and its recessed vortex design allows stringy material and organic sludge to pass right through it.

It has been a staple in the rental industry for many years, and is now available to water feature professionals and hobbyists alike. Ask your favorite distributor if they have the Tsurumi HS2.4S and contact Tsurumi directly with distributor/dealer inquires.

Tsurumi America, Inc.
Brandon Kuglin
888/TSURUMI
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EasyPro Introduces 16” and 32” Waterfall Diffusers

These new waterfall diffusers are made to last and faster to install than any other spillway on the market.

• Ideal for use at beginning of streams and in block walls, pools and formal fountains
• Extra-strong vertical rib design creates a nearly indestructible diffuser
• Low-profile design of 3.5” makes them easy to conceal
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Aquaponics as Food Source

This new GREEN product from Misty Mountain is their latest design to grow most all vegetable and fish food year round. It is environmentally friendly and provides fresh, organic vegetables and fish year round. Non-GMO seeds are available as well as the fish for this system.

This new design combines both hydroponics and aquaculture to solve the major part of the cost of food. The system uses approximately a seven-foot by seven-foot area of space over space. The system is also expandable and allows the user to advance to higher levels of food production. The system uses the fish to produce the food for the plants while allowing the plants to purify the water for the fish. This nature to nature method is a proven science that gives you fish, organic vegetables and garden-fresh food. For the “Do-It-Yourselfers,” Misty Mountain also has “Aquaponics in a Box”.

Misty Mountain
800/493-0564
mystymountaininks@gmail.com
info@lifegardaquatics.com

EasyProiacients, call 800/448-3873 or visit easypropondproducts.com.

Aquaponics By:
Misty Mountain
1-800-493-0564

2014 IWGS Symposium Dates and Location Announced

The International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society (IWGS) announces that Denver, Colo. will serve as the site of the organization’s 2014 Annual Symposium. The 2014 IWGS Symposium will take place from August 14th – 16th with an additional optional day of tours to the Rocky Mountains on August 17th. Denver Botanic Gardens, Hudson Gardens and the Colorado Water Garden Society will serve as local hosts for this event.

Attendees to the conference will have the opportunity to participate in the annual CWGS Water Blossom Festival at Denver Botanic Gardens which will include guided tours, demonstrations, public voting for the IWGS New Waterlily Competition entries and a talk given by the symposium’s keynote speaker. A special exhibit of internationally renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly’s artwork will be featured throughout the conference and water features at DBG during this time.

A tour of nearby Hudson Gardens, which showcases multiple water features, will also be included in the symposium highlights. An optional trip to Mt. Goliath, an alpine garden trail maintained by Denver Botanic Gardens, will be offered on August 17th. This tour will continue from Mr. Goliath to the peak of Mt. Evans and will give attendees the opportunity to view unique, high-elevation plant and animal life.

Speakers will provide talks on multiple water gardening related topics at the event’s host hotel, the Holiday Inn at Cherry Creek, each morning of the conference. Meals will be provided with conference registration, including catered dinners at Denver Botanic Gardens and Hudson Gardens. Additional details regarding featured speakers, hotel registration rates and conference registration prices will be posted on the IWGS website in the coming weeks.
of kind. So let’s make lemonade here, in spite of the incendiary nature of the attack on my firm’s professional standards and integrity.

When we talk about safety and our responsibility as professionals providing bodies of water for our customers – there should be no debate.

We, meaning all of us in the pond industry, clearly have a professional, public and I dare say moral responsibility to provide water that is biologically safe, that is ergonomically safe, and that is electrically safe. Certainly, without question, simply declaring a pond is suitable for swimming is not the answer, and who in their right mind would think that’s all there is to it? We certainly don’t.

That premise proffered in the piece is patently absurd and beneath serious consideration.

Rather, we must always provide systems that not only enhance the homeowner experience, but give them peace of mind that they and their loved ones can interact with the water with the expectation that the design, engineering and installation meet acceptable benchmarks for safety.

As an example, our company is a huge advocate of UV treatment systems for the simple and commonsense reason that water should be free of potentially harmful pathogens. Furthermore, it’s been reliably proven by way of empirically-scientific data, the “wetlands effect” or more familiarly known as biological filtration, when properly designed and installed, does reduce the presence of harmful bacteria to a point of virtually no risk.

I also believe that when water is inevitably subject to human contact, the physicality of the way people interface with the water also be designed with safety in mind. Specifically, I mean that there is proper entry and egress, that no place in the body of water is electrically safe. Certainly, without question, simply declaring a water that is biologically safe, that is ergonomically safe, and that is electrically safe. But before we do, we must always provide systems that not only enhance the homeowner experience, but give them peace of mind that they and their loved ones can interact with the water with the expectation that the design, engineering and installation meet acceptable benchmarks for safety.

Isn’t all of that the proverbial “no brainer”? I think so.

My personal belief is that if we’re to move forward with the “swimming pond” debate, we should all agree that safety is paramount value, not just something we address with words, but also in practice. And as an industry, we should make use of GFCI technology to add a layer of safety to our systems that we install.

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