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40 **Aquascape’s Pondemonium® 2012**  
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Over 400 attendees participated in this year’s Pondemonium. The theme was — Reinvent Yourself to Win the Battle. Aquascape kept the participants very busy; take a look at the many activities covered in just four days. Also presented were several special awards that went to Mike Gannon, Joel Reinders, and Chris Siewing.

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*See the Pond Industry Directory at pondsources.com*
Upcoming Events

November 3–5
2012 INFO TANZA
Orlando, Florida
8th Annual Trade Show and Educational Seminars hosted by IPPCA. In conjunction with the Irrigation Show. www.ippca.com/InfoTanza-home

November 4–5
Irrigation Show 2012
Orlando, Florida
www.irrigation.org

November 6–8
Pool|Spa|Patio Expo
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.poolspapatio.com

2013

February 7–8, 2013
Water Garden Expo 2013
Shawnee, Oklahoma
Watch for information on their website www.wgexpo.com

See ad on page 23.

February 23–24, 2013
Koi Club of San Diego Koi Show
Del Mar Fairgrounds
 Held by the Koi Club of San Diego. See their website for more details. www.koiclubsandiego.org

November 6–7, 2013
Irrigation Show 2013
Austin Convention Center
Austin, Texas

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Wow, where did the year go? When you receive this issue we may still be in Orlando, Florida for INFO TANZA. An article and pictures covering this event will be in the January/February 2013 issue. Also in that issue the Product of the Year selections will be featured. We are looking forward to meeting up with you in Florida!

Going back in time, Cindy and I were fortunate to take a “vacation” to New Orleans; a rare event. But even on vacation we are attracted to water features, fountains, koi, and the beauty. It has been 30 years since the first time we last visited New Orleans. It was pretty much the way we remembered it, which was wonderful. Of course we had to go to places like Café Du Monde and Bourbon Street.

We stumbled (no we didn’t stumble because we had been drinking) upon the famous Pat Obrien’s Courtyard that had two fire and water fountains. Pictured here is the smaller of the two. It was illuminated with alternating colored lights, which added nicely to the impact. To see the larger fountain turn to Finishing Up - New Orleans on page 46.

It was interesting to see that many of the rain down spouts in the French Quarter were molded in the shape of a koi-like fish; some looked brand new and some looked a hundred years old.

This time of year we like to think about the past and plan for the future. If you have something planned for next year be sure to share it with us at pr@pondtrademag.com.
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by Brian Buchholtz
PondWorks


The client was an existing customer whose home was devastated by fire.

In order to re-build, the existing pond needed to be removed. The importance of the pond and sound of water was paramount to the client. There was never a question whether there would be a new pond, but rather how it would take shape and how it could integrate with the home. PondWorks worked with the client and the Landscape Architect to fully integrate their new water feature.
The Site was a Challenge

The pond needed to be sandwiched between the main house, a detached garage and a steep drop off. The site also needed to serve as an entryway, an outdoor living area and a transition zone. Just a little challenging. The hilltop location...
afforded very limited access and with countless contractors jockeying for the same space and their turn to occupy it, the clients patiently waited for their new pond to even begin to take shape.

Once construction on the pond began it was a two-week process to build this approximately 15,000-gal pond. Since the pond could only be accessed from one side by a machine no wider than 8' the sequencing was critical to excavate the pond, remove soil from the area and then allow boulders to be placed precisely even on the furthest edges of the project.

The pond has two bottom drains, six underwater jets, and one surface skimmer (fairly standard for a PondWorks installation like this), which are integrated into the rocks and boulders.

The rock selected for this project was fieldstone from North Eastern Pennsylvania and ranges from baseball size to approximately 4,000 lbs.

Other Features

The project includes a bubbling rock at the headwaters of a small stream and collecting pool, a 2' high, 3' wide waterfall that cascades into the main pond and a series of stepping-stones that cross the pond just adjacent to the waterfall. The stepping-stone pathway was critical to the project allowing the client easy direct access to an existing path. Without the stepping-stones the pond would have been a barrier between the house and other parts of the property.

Behind the scenes, keeping the pond healthy and clear is an external pump, UV sterilizer, Bio-mechanical filter, air pump and inline heater all housed in custom made sub grade equipment vaults.

About the Author

PondWorks was started by owner Brian Buchholtz in 1994. PondWorks’ full time staff of 10 dedicated and knowledgeable professionals currently designs, builds and maintains all types and sizes of water features in the greater Philadelphia area and beyond. PondWorks can be reached at 610-327-1423 or at www.pondworksonline.com.
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In our industry a great deal has been written about the features and advantages of magnetic and direct drive submersible pumps. Most professionals and consumers alike select a submersible pump for their pond and waterfall installations. This article will address a different type of pond pump used by installers that may have considerable advantages over submersible pumps in many specific applications. The external pond pump is an invaluable tool for our trade and one that is often overlooked as an installation option.

What is an external pond pump? While the types and features of external pond pumps may vary, the definition remains constant. An external pond pump is one that sits outside of (or external to) the pond itself. Applications for these pumps include, but are not limited to, waterfalls, pulling from bottom drains, formal fountains, pond circulation, or any situation where a submersible pump is not practical or attractive.

One type of external pond pump is a magnetic coupled asynchronous pump. These pumps may be used both as submersible and as external in-line pumps and feature tubing ready intakes and outlets. These are often used on smaller ponds, tanks and wall fountains. New technologies are improving this type of pump and although they are not the focus of this article they may one day become a more widely recognized choice for certain external applications.

The other type of pump is the more widely recognized centrifugal pump. Traditional motor driven external pumps will range in volume from under 2000 gph to giant 3 HP pumps capable of delivering tens of thousands of GPH flows. These pumps are divided into multiple categories, which have created confusion for some prospective buyers on how to proceed.

External pumps are divided into flooded suction or self-priming. They are also divided into high flow/low head or high flow/high head. Additionally they may be either 115 volt or 230 volt or, as many do, can be operated at either voltage. External pumps can be single speed or multiple speeds. With so many choices available it is little wonder that consumers and installers alike must take great care in choosing the correct pump for each specific application.
Low Head and High Head External Pumps

The selection of either a high head or low head external pump depends upon the height of the water feature it is intended for. If building a 3-4 high waterfall or running to a pressurized filter it is very likely that a low head external pump will be perfect for the job. If supplying a 20 foot waterfall or moving through a very long run of pipe you may be looking at the need for a high head external pump. The first step in determining the correct type of pump will be to calculate your total dynamic head. That includes calculating for the height of the water feature, the length of the run, the inside diameter of the pipe used, and the number and type of fittings such as elbows or Y’s that will be used in the plumbing. Several industry charts provide directions for calculating the total dynamic head and this article will not delve into those calculations. (See Dynamic Head Box)

Once you have your total dynamic head pressure (TDH) for your installation you can then determine the GPH flow required at the TDH and consult the flow charts of any of the external pumps on the market. According to Rick Smith of Easy Pro Pond Products, “Each external pump will have a chart with the GPH flow at various head heights. By matching up your requirements to these charts you can select the best external pump for your job.” Rick goes on to say that “Using the wrong size or type of external pump can cost a tremendous amount in wasted electricity or could even damage the pump or reduce its lifespan.”

As an example, if your planned installation requires a total dynamic head of 15 foot and you would like a flow of 5000 GPH it would be physically possible to use an external high head pump. However, you would not want to for two reasons. First, the high head pump may consume double the electricity that the low head pump does. This means hundreds of dollars more per year in operational costs due to the selection of the wrong pump type. Second, the high head external pump may have a greatly reduced lifespan if not operated with enough backpressure. Lack of proper pressure can lead to cavitation in the impellor chamber and overheating of the pump motor.

Dynamic Head

For those who do not have their own system or chart for dynamic head I strongly recommend the one Demi Fortuna, owner of August Moon Designs and associate of Atlantic Water Gardens, has painstakingly put together over many years of experimenting. Please contact the IPPCA (International Professional Pond Companies Association) at www.ippca.com or call 770-592-9790 and your industry trade organization can make sure this information is provided to you.
With the example above let’s compare two different external pumps. Both are rated at just over 8000 gph maximum flow but one is a low head external pump and the other is a high head external pump. The Easy Pro LOW HEAD EX8800 has a maximum flow of 8200 GPH and at the 15 foot head will generate 5040 GPH. The Easy Pro HIGH HEAD EX8500 has a maximum flow of 8500 GPH and at 20 foot of head is still pumping 6960 GPH. If you were to use the High Head EX8500 you would be consuming 1385 watts versus 449 watts with the Low Head EX8800. For an average electrical rate this means that in the course of one year’s time the High Head pump will consume $616.85 MORE in electricity than the Low Head pump will.

Additionally the High Head pump when used in a low head application must have the water throttled back in order to put enough back pressure on the pump to prevent cavitation and premature pump failure.

Conversely if the TDH of the application was 30 foot then the Low Head pump would not work at all but the High Head EX8500 would still be generating a flow of up to 6000 GPH.

115 and 230 Volt Pumps

External Pond pumps are sold as either 115 volts or 230 volts with quite a few operable at either voltage with a simple “in field” modification. Many smaller external pumps will be 115 volts exclusively and many very large external pumps are 230 volts exclusively. Many people have been confused over using 115 or 230 volts. A lot of bad information exists telling consumers that 230 volts will save them electricity and save them hundreds of dollars in operating costs. That is not exactly true. If a pump running on 115 volts pulls 4 amps it will consume 460 watts of electricity (volts times amps equals watts). If the same pump runs at 230 volts the amps drawn will be half of what they were at 115 volts. Therefore 230 volts x 2 amps = 460 watts. The cost of operation will remain the same.

Now it is important to note that this is a very simple explanation and variations exist electrically that may alter the formula to one degree or another. The important thing to note is that for smaller external pumps the choice of 115 or 230 volts should be made based upon the availability of either at the installation site. To change an electrical system from 115 volts to 230 volts for the installation of a 3000 GPH external pump is almost always a waste of time and money. Consider also that most municipalities have strict guidelines for electrical work and 230 volt lines almost universally must be installed by a certified electrician.

On the other hand, very large external pumps benefit from installation with 230 volt lines. While some larger external pumps may allow switching from the 230 volt preset to a 115 volt output it is often not in the best interest to do so. For example: A high head self priming external pump set to draw 11 amp at 230 volts will pull 20 amps at 115 volts. If this is compounded with a lengthy run of electrical wire it will be necessary to increase the SIZE of the wiring in the installation to cover the voltage drop and the high amperage draw. This also would require a certified electrician to install and negates any savings associated with the initial desire to run at 115 volts.

Flooded Suction and Self-priming Pumps

Like with the choices above, the decision of whether to purchase a self-priming pump should be made according to the job at hand. With either type of pump one must remember that external pumps must have water flowing through them in order to operate properly and prevent pump damage. If using a flooded suction pump this means that the pump must be placed at, or below the level of the pump in order to have a constant supply of water. This type of pump is often placed into a well or sump, which is excavated below the water level of the pond. If using in a well it is important to remember to leave enough space around the pump for air to circulate.

Andy Schoenberger, Outdoor Living Product and Marketing Group Manager at Franklin Electric (Little Giant), suggested, “Efforts should be made to keep external pumps cool to promote longer pump life. Even the use of a small fan inside a pump chamber can be an effective way to prevent overheating and help the pump last many additional years.” Andy continued, “External pumps, when properly cared for and operated, can last upwards of 10 years. They can last far longer than any type of submersible pump.”

In some cases a flooded suction pump can be set on the same level as the pond and still function properly. Installing a check valve in the tubing BELOW the surface of the pond will
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help keep the pump primed when the unit is shut off and will allow for restarting the pump without hand priming.

A self-priming external pump is a time and labor saving product that will often eliminate the need for below grade pump placement. A self-priming pump will pull water to the pump from short distances thereby eliminating the need to dig a well or sump for the external pump to sit in. External self-priming pumps are more expensive than their flooded suction counterparts but the extra expense may be worth it depending upon the design of the pond or water feature installation.

Please remember that both self-priming and flooded suction pumps must be primed prior to their first operation. The installation of a check valve and the filling of the tubing or leaf trap (also known as a priming pot) will prime the pump for its first use.

**Single Speed and Two Speed Pumps**

The final choice in External Pond pumps is one of speed. Some manufacturers of external pumps offer a simple switch to run the pump at either high or low speed. The speed setting of these pumps determines the GPH flow from the pump. One would want to consider this type of pump when running it at the lower speed will produce the needed flow but there will be times when a higher flow is needed. That could include the desire to have a higher waterfall flow during a party or public viewing. It could also provide the ability to backwash a filter at a higher flow for enhanced cleaning. The important thing to remember is that running at the higher speed is extremely costly. Demi Fortuna cautions buyers by stating, “Doubling the speed and flow of the pump often requires four times the electricity.”

Use of a dual speed external pump at the low speed setting can be extremely energy efficient and provide quiet operation. Running the pump at high speed continuously will increase both the noise level of the pump and greatly increase the electrical consumption.

**Variable Speed Control Panels**

The larger the external pump the more power it takes and the more it costs to operate. Like two-speed pumps, Control Drive panels are a way to reduce the speed of the pump and the energy it consumes. According to Art Hantla, Fielding Pumps national sales manager for the Shinmaywa pump line, “A variable speed control panel will not only allow the customer the option of substantial power savings and flow control but will extend the life of a pump with “soft” starts and stops.” Art goes on to say, “Control panels provide multiple speed settings for consumers to change the appearance of their water feature while providing instant power downs when a fault or short is detected in the system.”

Control panels are typically expensive but offer considerable benefits especially during the installation of very large pumps that may more than pay for themselves over time.

**General External Pond Notes and Tips**

1. Pool pumps are not a good choice for most pond applications. Pool pumps are designed to be low flow with extremely high pressure. Those type of pool systems have very small (usually 1 or 1.5 inch tubing) and are designed for low flows. Using a pool pump for a low head pond or waterfall application is both costly in terms of electrical consumption as well as the frequent cause of premature pump failure. An external pump must run with adequate backpressure to prevent cavitation and motor damage.

2. The installation of a check valve is a good idea with all external pump installations. The check valve makes the external pump easier to prime and is definitely a must for above grade pumps.

3. A leaf trap or priming pot is a good idea for external pump setups. External pumps have a much lower solids handling capability than some direct drive submersible pumps. The leaf trap is an easily cleanable pre-filter that both helps the pump maintain its prime as well as keeping large solids away from the pump.

4. Placing a ball valve in the tubing on both sides of the external pump makes removing the pump for maintenance much easier and prevents drainage of pond water during removal.

5. External pond pumps should be placed as close as possible to the water supply. Even self-priming pumps will have difficulty drawing water from a distance. If a long run of tubing is required you would want to make it on the discharge side of the pump rather than the intake. Likewise you would want to push water through a filter rather than drawing it through on the intake side.

6. The manufacturer built outlets on an external pump may not be the required tubing diameter size. Tubing requirements are determined by your height of feature, distance traveled and the amount of GPH flow desired. Consult a plumbing flow chart when planning your project to determine which size tubing your job requires. Typically the larger the better for any type of pond pump. The larger the tube the less friction on the water flowing through it and the more efficient the pump will operate.

7. On the intake side of a pump use tubing equal to or larger than the tubing on the discharge side.
8. A pond pump that sounds like it is chewing on gravel is cavitating. The sound you hear is the pump chewing on a froth of air and water. The pump and backpressure on the system need to be checked.

Conclusion

In conclusion the selection of an external pump can be a confusing prospect for a first time purchaser. With multiple options from more than a dozen external pump manufacturers it is important to select your pump according to the specific installation requirements. External pond pumps offer a wide range of features and benefits that submersible pumps do not. Wonderful results are possible with the correct pump and an abundance of information and assistance is available from manufacturers to assist you in the selection process. I encourage everyone to take time to learn more about external pond pumps and add this valuable resource to your company’s offerings.

About the Author

John Olson is the CEO of Graystone Industries and an avid alligator wrestler. Graystone is a distributor for over a dozen brands of quality pond supplies with warehouse and retail locations in GA and NC as well as an Internet store at www.graystonecreations.com.

John resides at Rosemont Estate in north Georgia with his wife and two children. When not riding go carts, gold mining, or trout fishing with the children, John helps other businesses in achieving their true potential.

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Ochibashigure are koi that have a brown pattern on a gray body. To be more precise, they have Chagoi (tea color) colored pattern on Soragoi (gray) body. As a member of Chagoi varieties, Ochibashigure, also known as Ochoa, is a popular variety for its big growth and friendly personality.

Ochoa in Ochibashigure means “fallen leaves.” Shigure in Ochibashigure means “drizzling rain in late autumn and early winter.” The look must have reminded breeders of the wet fallen leaves on the ground during a rain.

When it comes to appreciation of this variety, here are four important qualities:

1) Clear Separation of the Two Colors;
2) Kohaku Pattern;
3) Fukurin/Netting Pattern;
4) Body Conformation.

1) Clear Separation of the Two Colors

Ochibashigure is defined as gray koi with brown pattern. It is critical that solid brown patches are clearly separated from the gray color of the body. Pay attention to the kiwa (edges). Oftentimes, you find inconsistent coloration and fuzzy kiwa. In addition, it is also valued more if koi have stronger brown like chocolate or red-wine than yellower brown. Because of the demand, we have seen more and more red-wine Ochibashigure in Niigata, Japan. It is interesting to know that breeders crossed Kohaku (red and white koi) with Ochibashigure to enhance brown more.

2) Kohaku Pattern

It is ideal to have Kohaku pattern on the body. In the ratio of 4:6 to 5:5, if brown pattern is nicely placed on every part of the body: head, shoulder, body and tail, it will make the koi an excellent work of art. Unlike Kohaku, however, if quality of brown/gray is good, it is accepted to have no brown pattern on its head.

3) Fukurin/Netting Pattern

Fukurin/netting pattern is definitely a great value. Fukurin is a netting pattern formed by the gaps between scales. Ochibashigure will grow big. When koi grow bigger and bigger, the scales cannot keep up the growth and start showing the gaps between. Fukurin becomes a valuable addition to the koi.
It is natural that there are no gaps when koi are small. You may see a crisp netting pattern.

4) Body Conformation

As the beauty of koi consist of body conformation, quality and pattern, body conformation definitely needs to be considered. However, the excellence of body conformation is difficult to judge when koi are small up to 12”. Unless it is deformed you can consider it OK. As koi mature, body conformation will become the most important factor. We would like to see a big head, shoulder, tree-like trunk and thick tail joint. Therefore, please find out the bloodline. The bloodline impacts the future growth. So whether you are looking at small Ochibashigure or
mid-sized Ochibashigure, you need to know the breeders. (You can find my recommendation later.)

For retailers, selling this variety is relatively easy in a way. Like her related varieties, Chagoi, Soragoi, Ochibashigure is one of the friendliest personalities in koi. She would probably be the first to come up and eat food and grow the biggest the quickest. She can be a very good leader of the school in a koi pond. So every pond needs at least one Ochibashigure. If your client does not have this variety in their pond, please recommend her for her personality instead of just her appearance.

Next appealing point would be the quality of her beauty. Check to see if the Ochibashigure at your local retail locations meet these conditions. Also, if you know the breeder of Ochibashigure, it is important to inform your clients. Hobbyists have become more and more educated lately and the bloodline (or breeders) has become an important factor in making their buying decision.

There are several breeders known for quality Ochibashigure. Igarashi Koi Farm. Otsuka Koi Farm. Fukasawa Koi Farm. If Ochibashigure in your stores are from one of those breeders, you can consider the bloodline good. 

**About the Author**

Taro Kodama is President of Kodama Koi Farm. They are the largest importer and distributor of quality Japanese Koi in the US. With locations in Japan, Hawaii and New Jersey, Kodama Koi Farm carries 35,000+ Japanese Koi from the top breeders in Japan. Taro Kodama, along with his father, Mamoru Kodama, provide not only winning show Koi, they also conduct many Koi seminars.
Letter to the Author

Letter about an article in the September/October Issue - Article Title: Pond Bottom Drain Technology – Yesterday & Today, by Eric Triplett, The Pond Digger

Dear Eric,

Your article in POND Trade Magazine was outstanding!

The information is simple yet comprehensive while the whole article is visually so attractive in that it captures and holds your attention while building your knowledge base on the subject.

Kudos to Tom Graham and yourself for this fine article.

I look forward to seeing you in Orlando!

William A. "Bill" Johnson CGCS, CQA Warranties and Field Services Firestone Specialty Products Company 250 West 96th Street Indianapolis, IN 46200 johnsonbill@firestonesp.com Direct Tel. No.: 317-575-7252 Toll Free Tel No.: 800-428-4442, extension 57252 Fax No. 317-428-5859

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by Daniel Crackower  
Living Water Aeration

Yes, fire and water make an outstanding effect. Here is one company’s approach to creating this hot new trend in water features – Fire Fountains.

For years, many have enjoyed having a water fountain in their yard. There is something about the soothing effect of not only listening to the sound of trickling water splashing onto the surface, but also it is very relaxing to sit there and watch the movement of the water as well. The combination of aesthetics and a peaceful sound have been a huge factor in the purchase of millions of water features.

We know that water fountains have been around since antiquity, however let us fast forward to 2012. There is a new innovation in fountains that literally adds a whole new element to your water feature. Fire Fountains are now the latest craze in outdoor living. Now, not only can you enjoy the soothing and calming sounds of water, but you also have the ambience and the magical, seemingly impossible effect of fire on water. Thanks to the latest technology, you can now have Las Vegas style, fire on water elemental effects in your backyard.

So now that I have set the bait, you are probably asking yourself how this is possible. How can a flame stay lit on top of water, without the water extinguishing it? The fact that the flame is coming from underneath the water is unique to this product. There are many other fire and water feature kits on the market. However the main difference is that most of these kits are only offering the illusion of fire on water, while the Fire Fountain manifold literally combines the two elements in one, fire on water.

The magic that makes this all possible is the “patent pending” vaporizer tips. The tips are stainless steel and they are mounted on a stainless steel manifold. These tips are essential because they allow the gas to escape the manifold, but they do not allow water to go back into the gas line.
To supply the Fire Fountain you can use Propane or Natural Gas as fuel. Also there are two ways you can ignite the Fire Fountain. You can light it manually with a BBQ pit style lighter or you can purchase the Auto Fire Remote Ignition System.

The Remote Ignition System is very unique in that it can ignite in even the most adverse weather conditions. The controller inside the ignition system is programmed to compensate for the effects of wind up to 50 MPH. Also the design makes it impossible for debris in the fountain to clog the pilot gas line. The Remote Ignition can be installed as an on and off switch on the wall or on a wireless device that can hang on your key ring. This is the same auto igniter that is used in the automated tiki torches and the dry application manifold installs.

The Fire Fountain manifolds are sold independent of the actual fountains/water feature. Typically a fountain is purchased, then the manifold and gas line are retrofitted into the fountain. Many different types of fountains work well for this including concrete and cast iron, however any material that is not combustible will likely work for this application.

The Fire Fountains come in several sizes with the smallest being a 7” manifold. Other popular sizes are 12” and 18”; also custom sized manifolds are available upon request.

In today’s economy more people are foregoing expensive vacations and are seeking ways to enjoy themselves with friends
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FIRE, WATER and STONE By Aqua Bella Designs

Fire, Water and Stone can be united in one piece of “Natures” Art created by Aqua Bella Designs.

Aqua Bella Designs custom features are hand crafted from natural stone boulders that are carefully selected locally. We start by looking for beautiful boulders of varying shapes, sizes and colors and carve the rocks manually. With unique characteristics that can only be found in nature, these stone features are sure to create the focal point in any landscape design, from contemporary to traditional.

With smoothly bubbling water or a warm burning flame, these boulders come to life and create an atmosphere unlike any other. Aqua Bella Designs has also recently created a unique way to combine both fire and water in one with our “Fire-Water Stone.”

Any of our fire stone features can be adapted for Natural gas or LPG gas supply. The addition of a Fire-Water Stone feature is easy too! The entire unit is self-contained and positioned on the Aqua Bella Designs AquaBox reservoir to recirculate the water. The AquaBox kit includes water pump and filtering system. You can find more information about these and other Aqua Bella Designs features on our website www.aquabelladesigns.com or by calling 800-617-5565.

and family in their own yard. Fire Fountains have not been around long, but already there is a huge demand from homeowners who want to spice up their outdoor living space. Also we have had much interest from hotels, restaurants and bars that are looking for a unique feature to wow and awe their customers.

Fire Fountains are excellent products for the Outdoor Living and Water Garden Industry. They are as safe to use as a BBQ grill, they are affordable, durable and versatile. I think you will be hard pressed to find another new product on the market today with this type of mass appeal.
Thank You

We would like to take this time to thank all our advertisers for the work they do to bring new products to the industry and for sharing their knowledge on the pages of this magazine.

Working together we are stronger and continue to grow.

We wish each of you happy and safe holidays.

POND Trade Magazine

November/December 2012
How to Have a Positive Response to the Negative

by Pam Greiner
The Green Pen

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e have all experienced that moment when you are faced with a negative comment, review, or opinion. No matter what anyone says, it has an effect on us if even for a moment.

When you own your own business it can be particularly difficult to hear a customer or a client’s less than stellar review of your products or service. But believe it or not, your response can greatly affect the brand of your business.

We are going to tackle three arenas where negative feedback can occur and how you can better respond to it, deal with it, or even hand it out; online, out of the office, and in the office.

The Internet has changed everything. We can Google a business and find every website that they have ever been mentioned on. Recently I worked with a client that was obsessed with online reviews. For the company it was exciting to see four or five stars and that positive feedback lit them up with enthusiasm. Anything less than that was deemed inconsequential. Bad reviews quickly rendered a verbal lashing of the reviewer on a personal level. A bad review was instantly ill-received and viewed as wrong and with no merit. Worse yet, there was the urge to respond, and not in the best way.

Ernest Hemingway once said, “I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.” I have found this to be particularly true of business owners mostly because they take criticism or negative feedback personally. It is understandable, though; their business is their baby and deeply personal. But the personal element is the first thing that needs to be eradicated. Rest assured that if someone took the time to write a review they are viewing their feedback from one of three outlooks: they actually are a fan and like your product or service and want to see it improve; they write and review everyone or everything (after all this is the digital age and everyone has a platform) and there is no personal intent whatsoever; or they are miserable human beings and the review is just a reflection of who they are (sad, but true). However, chances are that you don’t know the person well enough to determine which of those is the case. You can’t stop people from posting negative comments or reviews but what you can do is setup a protocol for how you handle online reviews and comments, especially the negative ones.

The most important thing to do is always respond. Always. Especially if the review is on Facebook, Twitter, or a review site where you have a large following and utilize the platform for relationship building. If it is a positive review, thank them. If it is negative, keep these things in mind:

• Do not delete the comment or ask that it be removed by a platform administrator. The problem is that can be seen as a cover-up or an aggressive (even passive-aggressive) way of not dealing with the problem, which could result in even more posts. If you feel that the post is inaccurate, private message the individual to resolve the problem and, once they are happy with the results, then ask them to consider removing the post.

• Don’t ignore the comment or post. By doing so you seem unresponsive or apathetic. A message other users will tune-in to in a bad way.

• Sleep on it. Don’t type when you are mad or agitated. Take some time to calm down, look into the problem at hand, and formulate a well thought out response.

• Apologies often go a long way. Whether you believe that the post is credible or not, starting with, “I’m sorry,” can alleviate much of the problem. There is an old saying that anything after the word “but” negates whatever you said first, so avoid the, “I’m sorry, but…” comment. You may just start a war of words that will likely make you look worse than them.

• Assure them that you are either working to fix the problem or that the problem has been resolved. This shows action on your part and can be reassuring to other followers and visitors that your business is proactive in handling problems in a positive manner.

Remember that the goal of online communications and Social Media is to build relationships and your brand. If you handle even the most negative criticism and reviews with professionalism and grace, you will often succeed in retaining that person and further building your relationship with others who have seen the post.
Online negativity can be dealt with behind closed doors and while you may be typing the appropriate response, you may be sticking out your tongue to the monitor, swearing, or even showing them that they are “number one” (admit it, you’ve done it once or twice). But when someone is sitting in front of you telling you negative things about your business, it is nearly impossible to keep a smile on your face. Most people won’t give negative feedback in person. It is like when you are at a restaurant and the server, manager, or owner asks you, “how is everything?” Inside you may feel like you are eating dog barf but more than likely your response will be, “it’s fine.” People typically don’t like confrontation so if they tell you there is a problem, then you may want to listen.

• **Change your physical response.** Take a deep breath. It seems like an easy enough thing to do but often as soon as a negative thought is uttered, we tense up and suck in a gasp of air that gets trapped inside. Breathing will help relax. Drop your shoulders. Relax your facial features. Appearing as if you are not taking the statement well may spark a response from the person before they even finish their statement.

• **Listen carefully.** Don’t be thinking of your response and argument while they are talking. Hear them out and use pauses to help formulate your response before speaking. If you are so busy looking for the false statements to refute, you are likely not hearing the statements that could be of real value.

• **Consider the source before responding.** If you know that this is a person who is miserable and making a miserable statement for the sake of being miserable, let it go. If it is a person who always wants to be right and is arguing for the sake of arguing, let it go. If it is a person with whom you have some type of relationship or who you think may have good insight or values, listen closely for they may see a different perspective than you can because you are so close to your business.

• **Say, “thank you.”** By starting your response in a calm and non-confrontational way you won’t be stoking the fires. Delivery of your response will be important. Keep your tone low, speak slowly and with purpose, use pauses to control the tempo of the conversation, be aware of your body language, be empathetic, and don’t attack the other person – keep it professional and not personal.

• **Don’t be right.** This one is a biggie. The worst thing about a negative review or response is getting into a situation where everyone wants to be “right.” It is a no-win situation and the more you fight to be right, the worse the situation will get. Know that the customer is not always right, but it doesn’t mean you have to tell them how wrong they are. They don’t know your business the way you do and how it operates. How you deliver your response may make things better or far worse. If you are intent on telling them in an arrogant manner how your business is run, you have completely lost them and probably angered them, too. If you need to fill in the blanks for them to better understand, tread lightly. While it is good to sound knowledgeable, confident, and professional, sometimes it is a fine line between that and arrogance. Keep things conversational and not adversarial.

• **Follow up.** If you can’t resolve the problem at that moment, assure the person that you will follow up with them promptly with a solution. Oftentimes people just want a response of some kind and you may not be able to give them what they want in the long run, but not responding at all will leave the person feeling more frustrated. Remember some people seem to thrive on negativity and are more likely to tell neighbors and friends about a bad experience as opposed to a good one.

Not all negative statements and reviews come from customers and clients. Sometimes as the owner or boss you have to give your own negative feedback. Keep in mind that your employees are an extension of you and, while it may be your business, they are often the ones who build and perpetuate your brand. They work with customers and clients and can be what ultimately determine how your company is viewed. Unfortunately, it is likely that no one will care about your business the way you do. It is your blood, sweat, and tears that serve as the foundation and ultimately you may reap the biggest reward but you also can carry the burden of loss. You count on your employees to do the best job they can and to help build your brand. Unfortunately sometimes you find yourself in a position where you have to address an issue or problem. **First of all remember that no one is perfect (including you)** and that from time to time the ball may get dropped. But you hired knowledgeable and talented people for a reason. To gain their respect and loyalty, you have to treat them with the same. So, when you have to give a negative review, keep these things in mind:

• **Be calm.** Don’t approach an employee in an aggressive or agitated state.

• **Be private.** It is already uncomfortable but giving a negative review or feedback in front of others can be humiliating.

• **Be timely and detailed.** Don’t wait to address a problem but make sure you have all your facts straight and are positive of their merit. By not having all the information, you may be the one in the wrong.

• **Approach the problem, not the person.** Don’t make it a personal issue and make sure the critique is of their work, not them.
• **Be realistic about your expectations.** If you are going into a review with the expectation that you are looking for admission and nothing else, then you will likely be disappointed. Which leads me to…

• **Allow for a response.** If you are going to give a negative review allow the employee to explain. Perhaps there is a valid explanation that you are unaware of. Listen to what they have to say.

• **Don’t be a hypocrite.** Do not give a negative review for the same things you do. The line, “do as I say, not as I do,” leaves employees lacking respect for their employer. Lead by example.

• **Be positive.** Reaffirm your faith in them and provide positive structure moving forward with defined parameters.

• **Know that not all situations can be resolved**, but even termination of employment can be done in a positive, non-confrontational way.

If you really want to build trust, respect, and loyalty within your company, allow reviews of you. Set parameters (carefully) and be ready to be objective. Oftentimes we do things we aren’t even aware of but that can set the tone for how business operates. But, don’t do it if you are going to take it personally or hold grudges! Know your own limits!

Winston Churchill said, “Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.” Bottom line is that not all negative feedback is actually negative. Sometimes it is good. Sometimes it is healthy. It would be unhealthy to build yourself or business on nothing but praise, for often knowledge and acceptance of our failures and imperfections is what creates a stronger foundation for growth and success.

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**About the Author**

Pam Greiner founded The Green Pen five years ago as the result of a passion for gardening and the environment. Focused on providing online and off, marketing solutions, our active client list includes several contractors, retailers, and distributors across the country. Our advice is regularly sought by many other contractors and businesses in the Green Industry, as well as other industries. Our services have included developing a variety of marketing materials for our clients including brochures, newsletters, as well as logo design, branding initiatives, and Web design & development. Additionally, we help our clients develop cost-effective marketing and e-marketing plans.

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Request info at www.pondtrademag.com/infocard/ # 1778
Plants are what transform a water feature into a water garden. They complement the design, add interest, create unity and balance, add color and establish a natural transition from water to land. Plants also work to improve water quality, provide hiding area for young fry, aquatic insects and other invertebrates; in turn provide foraging area for fish. In earth bottom ponds a densely planted perimeter will also deter sediment and nutrient runoff. Their absence can negate a contractor’s credibility and more importantly leave money on the table.

Plants are often overlooked and are a valuable source of revenue in the landscape plan. Additionally clients often feel slighted when the plant selection and planting is left to them; as if the job is incomplete. There are a few avid gardeners that prefer to do it themselves but that segment of the population is relatively small. A good understanding of plants and their growing habits can prove invaluable when selecting or recommending plant choices for the water feature as well as adding to your bottom line.

I frequently field calls from customers who have had plants used inappropriately in their garden ponds and been disheartened that the contractor wasn’t knowledgeable. In some cases the plants used have aggressive tendencies and if they aren’t planted in a way that provides boundaries they can impose themselves all over the garden pond. It’s kind of like planting Kudzu in the backyard garden. It comes down to the philosophy that we often hear in other parts of the green industry; Right Plant – Right Place. In the case of Kudzu the absence of natural predators creates an imbalance.

In another instance planting a tree that thrives in the shade out in an open field will likely result in a very unhappy tree that will be prone to insect and disease predation. The poor choice of location weakens the tree and affects its ability to fend off predation. To relate that philosophy to the water garden it would be like planting water lilies in a woodland pond with no direct sunlight. They won’t thrive and will become victims of predation if the absence of sunlight doesn’t kill them first.
As a contractor if you haven’t been planting your water gardens you owe it to yourself to become educated or at least align yourself with a grower who is. As a service we will quote a planting plan for anyone who can provide a picture and a few details of the pond like shallow water areas, shelf width, maximum depths, etc. Also if the pond is designed with planting pockets there are restrictions on what plants will mind their manners in a relatively free and open growing area. Often the problem that lies in gravel areas (planting pockets) is that some plant roots like to hang on to gravel making long-term maintenance problematic. After extended periods of growth they will eventually need to be maintained and heavy equipment may be required because the dense growth and gravel are impermeable to modern hand tools. It is difficult to cut through plant roots that have gravel attached to the roots. Serious consideration should be given to the plant selection and long-term success or failure prior to execution. Alternative substrates, like calcined clay can be substituted for gravel to ease maintenance. It is lighter weight and easier to cut through than gravel so it is better suited to plants like iris that have clinging root systems.

Some landscape contractors have been successful creating planting pockets and establishing plants without any media at all. This type of hydroponic growing has huge benefits beyond easing the process of plant maintenance. Fish fry, insects, tadpoles, bacteria, etc. will all prosper in the open root environment. Nutrients are then derived directly from the water body rather than from a soil or clay substrate.

Shoreline restoration in large ponds is another area that is increasingly a place for earning additional revenue. Certainly many of the communities in which garden pond work is
performed may have storm water ponds that are in disrepair. Be on the lookout for eroded banks that are not only unsightly but contribute to sediment accumulations in the pond. Excavation can be performed to prep the banks for Wetland Carpets which are pre-planted coir mats. Both Maryland Aquatic Nurseries and Charleston Aquatic Nurseries offer them shipped via common carrier on pallets.

The establishment of the plants prior to the Carpet installation keeps predators like geese and ducks at bay because the rooted plants are not easily plucked out as they can be following traditional plug planting methods. Additionally the Wetland Carpets deter further erosion. Weed growth under the Carpet is deterred by the thickness of the mat. Weed seeds can’t germinate and penetrate the coir so the more favorable plants have an opportunity to become established without having to compete. Spot treatments for weeds with herbicide will then eliminate the competition until the shoreline fills in. Color and foliage combinations can be selected to accommodate specific height requirements. Native and/or nonnative plants can be used based on the sight and situation. Lively and beautiful perimeters (no mow zones) can increase property values and definitely change the way the ponds are perceived by the community. Our experience has been that what begins as an eyesore in the community transforms into a focal point, attracting the attention of resident and visitors.

In addition to Wetland Carpets, the Floating Wetlands have been instrumental in improving water quality and nutrient uptake via plants in deteriorated pond situations. Research continues to mount supporting Floating Wetlands as a viable option to improve water quality. Bottom aeration is combined with rafted plants whose roots hang below the floating raft. Nutrient rich water is circulated from the bottom up toward the roots for enhanced nutrient absorption. Several plants have proven highly effective at nutrient uptake: Hibiscus moschuetos, Decodon verticillata and Justicia americana are at the top of the list of plants that are both attractive and functional. Like the Wetland Carpets, the Floating Wetlands have generated excitement and enthusiasm in the community.

Landscape contractors need to be especially aware what happens after they leave. A sound knowledge of plant material is the key to satisfying customers. Plants are often overlooked and are a valuable source of revenue in the landscape plan so that knowledge won’t be going to waste. Additionally clients often feel slighted if the plant selection and planting is left to them; it is frequently perceived as an incomplete job. More consumers are willing to pay for your expertise. A good understanding of plants and their growing habits can prove invaluable when selecting or recommending plant choices for the water feature as well as adding to your bottom line.

Wetland Carpets and Floating Wetlands are available from both Charleston Aquatic Nurseries and Maryland Aquatic Nurseries.

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**About the Author**

Kelly Billing, Nursery Manager, has over 20 years experience in the water gardening industry wholesale trade working for Maryland Aquatic Nurseries, Inc.

Kelly is a Maryland Certified Professional Horticulturist. She recently cooperated with Ben Helm on a water gardening book that was published in the US (Water Gardeners Bible) and UK (Water Gardens) as well as co-authored with Paula Biles, The Lotus, Know It and Grow It for the IWGS.

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Over the past few months, officials have confirmed that Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) caused the death of numerous koi and common carp in the US. Several KHV outbreaks have been reported in California, New York, Texas and Missouri resulting in devastating losses for koi hobbyists.

The economic impact of KHV can be extreme. Based on the replacement value of koi stocks alone, it’s estimated that the impact of KHV has already exceeded $120 million in the US.1 Given mortality rates in excess of 70% and the unpredictability of outbreaks, koi worth more than $3 billion are at risk every year. To date, roughly 15% of koi dealers have experienced a KHV outbreak and 31% of hobbyists have direct or indirect experience with KHV.2 While there is no cure for KHV, there is now a preventative solution called CAVOY®, the first and only vaccine registered in the US to help prevent KHV.

**What You Need to Know About KHV**

KHV is a highly contagious viral disease that infects ornamental koi and common carp. Since the first recognized case was detected in England in 1996, the disease has spread rapidly. In fact, it was declared endemic in Israel in 1998 and is now present in all countries that culture koi, excluding Australia. “KHV is the single most devastating threat to koi ponds and the koi industry as a whole,” said Dr. Nick Saint-Erne, DVM, Technical Services Veterinarian for PetSmart Inc. “With the introduction of Cavoy vaccination, there is now a preventative option available to supplement proper pond management and biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of the disease.”

KHV is also referred to as cyprinid herpes virus type 3 (CyHV-3). It is transmitted through direct contact with infected fish, body fluids from infected fish, through water or contaminated equipment. The virus infects via penetration of the skin, gills and possibly oral consumption.

KHV is diagnosed by virus isolation, antibody testing or PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) techniques. Alarmingly, more than 80% of fish exposed to the KHV virus at permissive temperatures will die 7 to 21 days following infection.3 In those koi that survive the initial infection, the virus may stay with the infected fish for the duration of their life, making the exposed fish potential carriers of the virus.

With the commitment and investment of time, effort and costs to set-up a pond, it can be devastating to hobbyists if the new addition of a koi to a pond causes an outbreak in their cherished koi.

**Prevention is the Best Medicine**

There is no cure for KHV, so the best way to protect against it is to take control of the fishes’ environment. As part of a broader KHV control strategy that includes pond management, general sanitation and containment measures, CAVOY is highly effective in helping prevent KHV and keeping koi healthy.

It is also important to consider quarantine procedures as part of your koi-health measures. Quarantining new koi shipments is a must for koi dealers and koi hobbyists alike when the health of the koi is a top priority.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Nearly 4.5 million US homes have koi as pets
- On average, nine koi live in each home pond
- Koi live typically 25 to 35 years, but can live 60 years or more
- 31% of koi hobbyists have direct or indirect experience with Koi Herpes Virus (KHV)
- KHV is transmitted readily through water and via contact with infected fish or contaminated equipment
- There are no curative therapies for KHV
- KHV has a mortality rate of >80% and most deaths occur in under 15 days post exposure to the virus
- Survivors of KHV may become disease carriers, intermittently shedding virus without disease symptoms
- CAVOY is the first safe and effective KHV vaccine for koi available in the United States
If pond owners are concerned that their koi may have been exposed to KHV, it is recommended that the fish is placed in a quarantine tank, well isolated from the main pond, and only handled with nets and equipment that are dedicated for use in the quarantine tank.

CAVOY is a vaccine, which is why it can only be administered under the supervision of a veterinarian. Unlike most vaccines that are injected, CAVOY is an immersion vaccine. To administer the vaccine, no needles, syringes or sedatives are needed. Koi are simply placed into a clean, aerated tank containing the vaccine for 45 minutes to one hour. Research studies are being conducted to confirm a recommended revaccination schedule.

The vaccine works by triggering the koi’s own natural disease-prevention mechanism, the immune system, to destroy KHV before the disease can take hold. In studies conducted in the US, survivability between 73% and 100% RPS (relative percent survival) against the wild type of the KHV virus was observed. CAVOY is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved vaccine and has an established safety profile when used according to label directions. In US studies, post vaccination survivability rate in koi weighing more than 100 grams was greater than 99%.

Maintaining a healthy koi pond involves several aquatic specialists - from pond professionals to koi retailers, knowledgeable hobbyists to trained aquatic veterinarians, they all have a role to play in protecting and preserving the beauty, balance and health of a koi pond. To learn more or to locate an aquatic veterinarian near you visit www.cavoy.com.

Sources:
3 Ronen et al., 2003.
by Keith Loria

Ordering new inventory can be a daunting task, especially in the current economic climate. Order too much and you could end up with excessive product sitting in your store and tying up your asset dollars. Order too little and you could run out of stock and be forced to backorder, creating an unhappy customer.

Inventory management and forecasting are strategic issues. Pond and backyard retailers that recognize this fact can typically provide higher levels of service to their customers and post higher profits.

“In the past year or two, I would say we are seeing a lot more ‘just in time’ buying trends where they are placing smaller weekly orders, rather than overloading in the spring and trying to guess,” said Joel Kammeraad, general manager of Complete Aquatics, Plain City, Ohio. “That makes the supplier’s job a little bit harder because we are the ones guessing the trends at that point. By working with the manufacturers closely, we understand what they are gearing up for and thinking [what] the trends are and we relay those same ideas back to the retailers. That’s what ultimately creates a demand.”

Before buying any products for a store, a savvy retailer will come up with an inventory buying philosophy that reflects the needs of the store, taking into consideration the current economic environment and the multitude of items currently available.

Jim Price, owner of Pondtastic Water Gardens in Orlando, Florida, understands that he must have enough inventory to keep people from going somewhere else, but his strategy is to buy as close to enough as possible.

“I believe that everything you have for sale needs to be in front of your customer, so we’re going to keep the shelves as full as possible at all times,” Price said. “At the same time, I don’t want to be a warehouse for my suppliers so we stock based on turnover.”

Sometimes that catches the store off guard, as something may be more popular than expected, but for the most part they stay ahead of it.

“We are constantly moving everything and changing locations for products and every year we evaluate how much space a given item is given based on sales, and that helps me with knowing how much to stock as well,” Price said. “Over the years, we have seen inventory levels grow and this year they are probably the highest they have been.”
Many retailers have followed this lead and are going with less inventory than they have before.

“As a distributor, we are seeing dealers carrying less inventory and relying on us to fill in the gaps and ship to customers directly whenever they need it,” said Randy Stewart, Division Manager of Pondliner of Shawnee, Oklahoma, which distributes to both Online and brick and mortar customers. “We are seeing retailers carrying a little less than normal and stocking less at the beginning of the season.”

Meanwhile, Kenneth Shayne, owner of Shayne’s Water Gardens & Ponds in Bermuda Dunes, California, has made somewhat drastic cutbacks to inventory.

“I have a nursery also, so in years past, I would carry a full line of plants and turtles and ducks and frogs and anything for a pond,” he said. “But now, the way things are, I don’t carry that inventory.”

Hank V. Campbell, manager of Across the Pond, Florence, Alabama, takes the opposite approach with his inventory strategy. “When the economy started to go down, I felt the last thing consumers needed to see was a lack of inventory,” he said. “It makes it that much more threatening, so we have increased inventory. In our business, we’ve not been hurt much; sales haven’t been skyrocketing but we have seen sales increases.”

Early-Buy Programs

When Oase North America Inc. of Hermosa Beach, California (parent company Oase Holding GmbH of Hoerstel, Germany), returned to the pond and water garden market earlier this year, they plan to end its early-buy programs.

According to Andreas Szabados, managing director of Oase North America, its new distribution plan is designed to introduce new products to the U.S. market whenever they become available rather than to coincide with early-buy programs and other seasonal deadlines.

Industry experts, however, don’t believe that the demise of these programs is imminent.

“I do not believe they are a thing of the past. I just feel retailers and pond contractors need to be reminded that to make well in the pond business, buying right is critical, especially for those who operate seasonally,” said Aaron Scarlata, Business Development Manager PondBuilder, Inc. & Blue Thumb Distributing, Inc. “If a business owner or the company buyer cannot invest one day into the business to learn for free, then they are missing the boat. Most early-buy programs are accompanied with training, special incentives and endless opportunities to add 5-30% to their bottom line, not the top line.”

In Price’s region, the products are put to use almost 12 months out of the year, so he is a big fan of early-buy programs.

“For us, it’s a beautiful thing in the southern market. While the rest of the country is sitting under snow, we are actually selling the stuff and I don’t have to pay for it until May,” he said. “In my market, I might do four or five early-buy orders to manufacturers based on the deals they offer.”

The one thing that bugs him is that in recent years, many of these “special” offers have remained in effect all year long, despite the fact that they were supposed to reward early-buy customers.

One manufacturer is currently offering a promotion of 20% off, which is better than the offer he received with his early-buy purchase.
“We see the early-buy programs still as a viable tool, especially for distributors, with retailers not buying as much up front as they used to,” Sorg says. “We need these early-buy programs to build up our inventory to ensure we have product on hand. With the early spring this year we were ready for those earlier than normal in-season orders.”

Trevor Gibby, owner of fish and pond product supplier Aquatic Elements Inc., Royston, Georgia, offers a deal a little different than the early-buy program for his customers. When a retailer explains their strategy for purchasing, Gibby works with them on a market-buying plan where they will agree to spend a set amount for the season.

“Let’s say they promise to buy $5,000 worth of fish for the season. I give them the discount, but they don’t need to get them all at one time,” he said. “I deliver them throughout the season which saves them 20-30% on fish and they don’t have to handle the fish at the stores.”

Trending Today

Working with retailers to develop the best inventory for their needs is an important component to a successful working relationship on the manufacturer or distributor side.

“Being a distributor we can help the retailer get the most turns out of their inventory,” said Tammy Sorg, marketing manager of Commerce Corp., a wholesale distributor of lawn and garden products based out of Grand Rapids, Michigan. “We deliver weekly, which enables them to keep their inventory lower and rely on us to fill their needs when they need the inventory. Our sales team is very well versed in this category and several of our retailers rely on their expertise to assist in the assortment.”
Campbell and others are finding that customers are looking for smaller and more value-oriented products, and are focusing their buying strategy around these items.

“Low maintenance features are hot right now,” he said. “With most family members busier than ever working, they need things more maintenance free. Manufacturers have followed along by making smaller items that are more economical.”

Even with shipping and gas prices going up, retailers are being conservative. Kammeraad said that he is shipping smaller units and plenty of space remains on the palate, and since one is paying by the palate anyway, they should order more to save money.

“But they want to keep their inventory extremely flexible and responsive to the market,” he said. “For them, it’s worth the risk not to buy as much.

A careful examination of the industry reveals that manufacturers and distributors are aggressively bringing a host of new and refined items to the market, so retailers need to do their homework to figure out what products work best—and will sell best—in their stores.

Of course, one needs to keep their eye on all products to see what people are buying.

“I watch trends of fountains because that’s a high enough price point that you don’t just buy it on a whim but it’s not so high that you have to get financing,” Price said. “If someone buys a $600 or $700 fountain, that’s my barometer of the economy.”

One trend taking shape involves pond owners becoming more involved with caring and maintaining their water gardens on their own, leading to more demand for these products.

“In 2012, we have seen a nice increase in our water gardening business as we are seeing more product being sold to those customers that are maintaining their water gardens,” Sorg said. “The new installations part of the business remains slow due to the housing market, but we are seeing those customers that are maintaining their water gardens adding on to their features.”

Hydroponics is a big buzz word in the pond business today, as water garden pumps, filtration, and air pumps take on a more significant role for the consumer.

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Hydroponics is a big buzz word in the pond business today, as water garden pumps, filtration, and air pumps take on a more significant role for the consumer.

“We are definitely targeting products towards the hydroponic category, Sorg said. “We are also seeing many more consumers that are starting to maintain large ponds on their properties so seeing a large increase in pond maintenance.”

Another uptick this year that many retailers are seeing comes from aquatic plants, with Price seeing sales double in this category from last year.

Whatever buying strategy one utilizes, it’s important to change with the times and be aware of all trends and happenings in the industry. 

About the Author

Keith Loria is a full-time freelance writer who focuses on business, entertainment and sports. When not writing he enjoys spending time with his daughters, Jordan and Cassidy. He can be reached at: freelancekeith@gmail.com.

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Aquascape’s Pondemonium® 2012 Focuses on Reinventing Your Business to Win the Battle

by Jennifer Zuri
Aquascape, Inc.

Over 400 distributors, contractors, and retailers from around the world came together in August for education, networking, and fun at the pond industry’s premier training event, Pondemonium® 2012. It was held in St. Charles, IL at the corporate headquarters of Aquascape, Inc.

This year’s theme was “Reinvent Yourself to Win the Battle” and offered workshops and hands-on training sessions designed to instruct attendees about optimizing their business to meet the challenges of today’s market.

The event kicked off Thursday night with a party on the outdoor terrace of the historic Chicago Shedd Aquarium, where the Aquascape team has installed three water features to educate visitors about the importance of native habitats and how everyone can make a positive impact on our environment.

Friday’s classroom sessions started with keynote presentations from Greg Wittstock, CEO and Founder of Aquascape, Inc. and
Jay Goltz, entrepreneur, speaker, and blogger for The New York Times. Greg's presentation, “Reinvent Yourself to Win the Battle” focused on keeping in step with the rapid changes in business and using new technology to connect with today’s consumer. Jay’s presentation, “Misperceptions and Missed Opportunities in Selling to Today’s New Consumer” honed in on practical applications that business owners can incorporate to optimize sales and growth.

Networking events were offered throughout Pondemonium® and included a trip to Ball Horticultural Company for dinner and a private tour of the expansive gardens. In addition, the annual beer garden at Aqualand, corporate headquarters of Aquascape, afforded opportunities for socializing and idea-swapping. A standard Build-a-Pond, pond tour, awards ceremony and annual Blow-Out Bash rounded out the agenda for 2012.

During the awards ceremony, Aquascape recognized customers who displayed one or more of the company’s core values of Character, Team, Win-4, and Fun. In addition, three recipients were selected to receive special awards:

- Mike Gannon of Full Service Aquatics in Summit, NJ was awarded 2012 Businessman of the Year by Greg Wittstock.
- Joel Reinders of Reinders Inc. in Sussex, WI was awarded 2012 Conservation/Sustainability Award by Ed Beaulieu, chief sustainability officer for Aquascape, Inc.
- Chris Siewing of Nature’s Re-Creations in St. Louis, MO was awarded Artist of the Year/Workmanship Award by Brian Helfrich, construction manager for Aquascape, Inc.

On Saturday, Ed Beaulieu, chief sustainability officer for Aquascape, delivered his keynote address on “The Ecosystem Concept of Water Features.”

Once again, Pondemonium® offered “Cup of Coffee” roundtable discussions in the morning, led by a variety of water feature contractors and retailers on topics covering pond construction, sales techniques, merchandising, marketing initiatives, social media application, and much more. Pondemonium® classroom workshops also featured a variety of topics and included a hands-on track designed for those new to the industry or pond builders wishing to improve construction techniques.
Celebrating the 9th Annual Pond Expo, Blue Thumb Distributing ended the summer season with a bang. Over 60 companies from all over the United States traveled into Saginaw, Michigan on August 30th to attend a dual event - Early Buy Pond Expo for Retailers looking to catch a glimpse of what is new for 2013 and a Contractor Open House with seminars, hands-on training and round table discussions held throughout the day.

Attendees realize there are few times throughout the busy season to spend on the phone talking, troubleshooting or learning about the vast array of pond products on the market. The Pond Expo delivers high impact value into one fun-filled event and is worth the time investment on many levels.

Local support by the Nursery Landscape Association and Blue Thumb’s personal banker from Citizens Bank helped attendees learn more ways to connect grow and plan for future business. As attendees prepare to enter the fall season, many left feeling energized and focused on the business at hand. In the words of one of this season’s attendees- “Great Staff, Great Give-Aways, Vendors and Products!”

Planning has begun for the big 10th Annual Pond Expo in 2013 which will prepare both new and existing water feature customers for transitions between online and retail shopping and ways to connect with Millennials, tomorrow’s future customer! For Pond Expo highlights or to follow next season’s event, please visit www.mipond.com for details.

Atlantic Water Gardens is pleased to present their new TidalWave Fountain Pumps. Sized to fit even the smallest applications, these pumps still deliver big performance, with higher head heights and lower wattages than the competition.

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To our great surprise when *POND Trade Magazine* was in New Orleans the end of September, we found two fire and water fountains. They are located in the Pat O’Brien’s Courtyard on Bourbon Street. Pat O’Brien’s is also famous for their dueling piano bar. The pianos are made of copper. Both are great stops.
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