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POND TRADE Magazine

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The benefits of shoreline planting

Carpeting the Pond
The benefits of shoreline planting

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When a potential customer showed John Loudon her enormous backyard space, he saw an opportunity for a very special water feature. The only thing standing in the way: a 100-foot dilapidated waterfall and pond structure, out of commission for years. See how John and his team at Artistic Design Garden Ponds turned an eyesore into a magnificent new waterfall.

14 The Ponics Solution
The health of our nation relies upon a nutritious and chemical-free diet. Yet with America in a state of emergency drought, safe, organic food is prohibitively expensive. Thankfully, new technologies are available that allow fresh, organic food to be grown more quickly and cost-effectively than ever before. Mike Garcia explains how hydroponics, aeroponics and aquaponics make the nutrient-rich water in our ponds more valuable than ever.

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Most business owners see competitors as the enemy. Brian Ellefson of Columbia Water Gardens sees them as collaborators, colleagues and friends. In this personal and enlightening article, Brian shares how your business can employ “Co-op-etition” to improve customer relationships and help grow a prosperous pond industry.

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30 Grow Your Own Menu
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38 Capital purchases
Do you understand the nuances of capital purchases? Are you using these nuances to your advantage? If not, you may be making critical mistakes that cost you money every time your company buys equipment. In this must-read, indepth article, Mark Battersby explains the many options and tools that could make a huge difference for your business.

44 PONDS for Peace
In 2010, an earthquake demolished the city of Léogâne, Haiti, destroying buildings, homes and families en masse. In Part Two of his heart-wrenching report, Rick Bartel outlines the efforts of Water for the World to restore hope and beauty to this ravaged town — and the effect pond philanthropy has on those who are willing to donate time and effort to the cause.

48 No Place Like Home
Not all koi ponds are ponds built just for koi. While many koi owners struggle to maintain expensive concrete ponds, Conrad Kleinholz offers a new method that reduces cost and improves efficiency. If you’re hoping to make koi a part of your life, this step-by-step instruction article is just the jump-start you’ve been looking for.

Coming in January —
The Great Swim Pond Debate
Beautiful, natural and refreshing, swim ponds are considered by some advocates to be the perfect blend of decorative water feature and backyard pool. Others consider them a dire safety hazard and a Pandora’s box of political troubles that put pond companies — and pond lovers — at risk.

In this hard-hitting investigative story, POND Trade dives headfirst into the swim pond debate with experts weighing in on both sides. Get all the details of the controversy that threatens the very future of the pond industry.
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Publisher’s Perspective

Judging from the leaves in my yard and the pumpkin coffee in my cup, fall is finally here and things are starting to slow down a bit. It’s once again time for a final season cleanup, and once that’s over it will be time to strategize for the next pond season. So get those leaves out of your pond, pull up a chair and let’s talk about the off-season!

For we snowy winter people, this time of year brings a lot more free time. You may want to start jotting down projects that you’ve been wanting to accomplish—all or that crumpled-up list you made a year ago and actually start tackling the items on it!

Perhaps you are thinking about buying some new equipment. Or maybe you’re thinking of starting a new website or revamping an old one.

If so, be sure to read Mark Battersby’s article on capital purchases on page 38. You have to spend money to make money, and his tips may give you some much-needed financial breaks (or save you from unnecessary costs).

Have you been itching to try hydroponics, aeroponics or aquaponics? These soilless growing technologies are revolutionizing the way we grow food, and that led pond owners may play a bigger role than you realize. Mike Garcia walks you through the implications of this exciting new phenomenon on page 14.

As for me, I am excited to share some big news. POND Trade now has an editorial committee! We formed this group so that POND Trade would have a panel of experts to bounce opinions for this investigative article, so be sure to email him at pcelauro@pondtrademag.com.

Until then, Happy PONDering!
The day was April 1, 2013. The phone rang, and the nice woman on the line began to explain her predicament. “My husband and I have a problem,” she said. “We have this waterfall on our property that is in need of some repair.”

Being that this was the beginning of the busiest part of our season, this was not the call I was hoping for. With about 80 pond cleanouts and a couple of new installations on the schedule—all from clients who wanted to get their ponds cleaned and running ASAP—I thought to myself, “How can I possibly take on a repair job with all of these customers, whom I have been servicing for several years, waiting?”

However, it is my nature to accommodate. So we talked a bit, I got all the necessary information, and we scheduled an appointment to see what kind of “repair” was needed.

The homeowners, Bob and Monica, explained to me that the area of the yard to the left of the old waterfall (where I was imagining a football field) was once a retention pond. The existing...
So now they were left with the old, dilapidated structure with about 40 tons of Aqua Blue Boulders — and no aqua to run it. “A pondless waterfall?” the homeowner asked. “With an underground reservoir? That would be great! No more maintenance. No more work!”

With a smile slowly growing on his face, he said, “I like this idea.”

Well, I liked this idea too — as would any pond builder! When you see a hillside that is just screaming “Waterfall!” at you, your artistic juices start flowing, your mouth starts watering and you begin to envision what you can do with this space. It becomes very exciting, to say the least. You envision what you can do with this space.

The Project Begins

As the new season progressed, all of the cleanouts and previously sold installations were completed. Soon enough, it was finally showtime.

A couple of days before the excavation began, I sent out a crew to take apart the old structure. Once all of the stone and old liner was removed, we began with the water reservoir. Using a backhoe, we excavated a basin approximately eight feet wide, 12 feet long and seven feet deep. (All of the excavated soil was used to create a berm along the hillside to deter the runoff water — which would otherwise flood the area — down to the storm drain at the lower end.) Taking advantage of having the backhoe onsite, we also used it to carve out our new cascades and stream leading to the reservoir. At the end of Day 1, I could not have been happier with the progress.

The next day we returned to finish the water reservoir. After pouring four inches of sand into the bottom of our 7-foot-deep hole, we installed our geotextile underlayment, 45 mil EPDM liner, another layer of geotextile underlayment, 50 32-gallon water matrix blocks and our pondless waterfall vault, which would later house the two 6,900 gallon-per-hour pumps. More sand was then used to backfill behind the liner in order to snug up the Aquablocks and protect the liner. The basin was then filled with a layer of six- to eight-inch granite boulders, followed by three or four tons of Red Flint gravel.

Our next step was to grade the stream and waterfall area and then put down the liner and underlayment. All was going as smooth as a well-oiled machine to this point … and then the rains came. We had about a two-and-a-half-inch rainfall in a two-hour span, followed by steady drizzle.

After a couple rounds of negotiating, we had a contract for a completely new “Pondless Waterfall” with multiple cascades streaming down a 70-foot-long stream into an 1,800-gallon water reservoir.

The rest of the day. When we returned the following day, our 70-foot-long stream was a great big mud hole. Rather than trying to work in ankle-deep mud, we decided to call it an early weekend.

The weekend was dry and the sun was shining, so we were all set to get back at it on Monday morning — but guess what? More rain, which meant a couple more days of drying out. Well, eventually the weather gave us a break and we were able to start building our waterfalls. We used every bit of the 40 tons of Aqua Blue stone that was already onsite, plus another 12 tons of 18- to 24-inch granite boulders to add some color and eight tons of weathered limestone accent boulders, ranging in size from about 1,000 to 2,500 pounds. 10 tons of Red Flint gravel was then used to cover the rest of the stream, and also spread between the boulders to help lock them into place. A couple of logs here and some driftwood there gave our already awesome-looking waterfalls an even more natural look.

Once this was all complete, we trenched for the plumbing and connected the pumps. By properly positioning a couple of Aquascape Waterfall Spillways, we were able to build our very top cascade to about six feet wide. Two more spillways were used a bit further downstream on opposite sides of the stream and at different heights, creating a spectacular mountainside look. The next cascade narrowed down to about three and a half feet to churn up the water and create a whitewater effect. The next segment traveled between a few large boulders before
dropping about two feet to the next level. This was followed by the stream widening out to slow down the water and create a lazy river effect, before tightening up again at the bottom for the dramatic spill into the reservoir at the very bottom.

A couple truckloads of topsoil were brought in to do our edge treatments and top off the area around our construction site. Our job was complete. No more filtering murky water. No more safety issues. No more maintenance. And no more work for the homeowners. Two more ecstatic customers and a very proud construction crew!

About the Author

John Loudon, owner of Artistic Design Garden Ponds, is a full-service construction and maintenance contractor. John started out as a hobbyist in his own inner-city Chicago backyard in 1995. His love and passion for building water features caused him to move from city to suburbs to start up his own business in 2004 and he has never looked back. He and his four-man crew love to work outdoors and put their passion into building outstanding, natural-looking ponds and waterfalls — and their pride in servicing their customers right. He is a Certified Aquascape Contractor and uses Aquascape products exclusively.

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Why new growing methods are the fix we didn’t know we needed

The Ponics Solution
Why new growing methods are the fix we didn’t know we needed

by Mike Garcia, CPPC, www.EnviroscapeLA.com

The Great Recession has taken its toll on planet Earth, and the United States has been especially hit hard. It seems that the pond world in particular is a hard-hit victim. Ponds and waterfalls are seen by the majority as a real luxury and expendable item. Many pond companies of five years ago are no longer around. There is a plethora of new start-ups today, as we see a new, stronger economy gaining steam and momentum. However, today’s consumer is different than those of the past. Gone are the days of “bigger is better” and “money is no object.” Because of the information age, today’s consumer is much more savvy when it comes to knowing the prices of things. It seems that reading an article on the Internet makes some feel like pseudo-experts in their fields of interest.

Environmental

The greatest environmental disaster in the United States is occurring as we speak. For the first time ever, more than half the United States (26 States) has declared a drought state of emergency. Southern California alone imports over 1.5 BILLION GALLONS OF WATER a day! Water prices are escalating as never before, making people water conscious as never before.

Health

Last November, as Americans headed to the polls to vote on current issues, one California issue was Proposition 37, which was the GMO Labeling bill. This bill was narrowly defeated by Big Business. Although defeated, the fact that Prop 37 was on the ballot tells us that many are concerned with GMOs and don’t really trust the current food supply. Many are resorting to growing their own food, but with water prices soaring like a rocket, this does not seem practical.

Saving Money

Have you been to the grocery store lately? Have you seen the prices of food rising each week? And if you attempt to buy organic (safe) food, forget it! It is so expensive and it does not keep nearly as long as the non-organic, pesticide-laden fruits and veggies. People’s number one concern is good health, which is maintained in part by a good diet. But sadly, the idea of eating healthy seems to get further away with each paycheck.

Is there a way that pond builders can come to the rescue? Many see us as an industry of companies who build big, expensive luxury items that waste electricity and water. However, this perception can change if we, as a group, can come together and learn, promote and build aquaponic, aeroponic and hydroponic systems. Pond water runs through this pipe filled with edible produce.
systems for our clients. How can this be?

As a group, the pond-building community has built thousands of water features and koi ponds. We know that koi pond water is perhaps the perfect plant food. Plant roots need water and nutrients, but they do not need soil! NASA figured out how to keep humans in outer space for long periods of time through the use of growing plants in aeroponic systems. Aeroponics is the growing of plants with a mixture of air and nutrient-rich water. Aquaponics is using fish water to grow food, and hydroponics is growing food in water. Let’s discuss what these systems have to offer the post-recession consumer.

Environmental Benefits

Did you know that NASA has figured out that growing with aeroponic technology will result in water savings of at least 95 percent Google “aeroponics” and check out the references on Wikipedia. Plant researchers back in the 18th century discovered that plants absorb essential mineral nutrients such as inorganic ions in water. Thus, soil is not essential to plant growth.

1. Hydroponics is a method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions, in water, without soil. Plant roots are grown in the nutrient solution. Plant researchers back in the 18th century discovered that plants absorb essential mineral nutrients such as inorganic ions in water. Thus, soil is not essential to plant growth.

2. Aeroponics was discovered by NASA about 50 years ago. Aeroponics is the process of growing plants in a mixture of air and nutrient-filled water. “Aeroponic” comes from two Greek words, meaning “air” and “labor.” Because water is used in aeroponics, it is sometimes considered a form of hydroponics. Aeroponics is becoming very popular due to its origins with NASA and the convenience of setting up this type of system in a matter of minutes. A vertical Garden can be set up in about five minutes.

3. Aquaponics is a sustainable food production system that combines aquaculture (raising fish for food) with hydroponics (growing plants in water). Bringing these two worlds together creates a symbiotic environment, where fish waste provides nutrients for plants and in return, clean water is returned back to the fish pond. When fish are big enough, people can eat the fish as well as the produce the system provides! The Aztecs are credited with discovering aquaponics (in addition to discovering chocolate — we certainly have a lot to thank them for!).

Money-Saving Benefits

Much has been written on the topic of growing plants without soil. Many terms have been used to describe this type of growing, and many distinctions are made by experts. For the record, here is a very simplified explanation of the three major types of soil-free gardening:

1) Hydroponics

2) Aeroponics

3) Aquaponics

Which system is best for your client? This depends on your level of expertise. It is advisable to look up the three mentioned ways of growing plants without soil and do further research. Read about them on Wikipedia. Learn what you can from YouTube videos. Once you are familiar with these three types of systems and their distinctions, make it a point to build a few systems from scratch. There are a couple of prefabricated, turnkey systems available online.

One concern you will hear from consumers is, “is the plastic food safe?” Do your research. There is such a thing as food-grade plastic, and there is also non-safe food grade, which can be harmful. Instead of using a hydroponic fertilizer, how about grabbing a five-gallon bucket and scooping up some pond water and pouring it into the system basin? You would essentially be using a “liquid manure,” and plants will thrive. This type of growing will result in plants growing two thirds faster, and the water in these type of systems recycle, achieving a 95 percent water saving!

As you can see in our exploration of the psychology of these systems, the world is seeking what we already have created. Let this be the flicker that flames your passion to take our industry above and beyond where it has gone before.
Today’s consumer is more than happy to spend money if he gets something in return. How about building a beautiful koi pond that dazzles the senses and soothes the soul? Make sure that as the public becomes more aware of these types of systems and customers want more information, they can turn to you for answers. Now is the time to brand yourself as the local expert. Remember: the sizzle sells the steak. It is advisable to install several types of systems in your own yard and/or install one at a relative’s home. This will give you the confidence and experience you need to be viewed as somebody in the know. With research, time and patience, you can expand your offerings into the world of soil-free gardening systems and grow your business.

About the Author
Mike Garcia, founder of Enviroscape, began his career in the horticultural field more than 25 years ago. After earning his degree in Ornamental Horticulture, he earned his C-27 Landscape Contractors License, as well as his D-49 Arborist Tree Service Contractors License. Under his leadership, Enviroscape has won numerous landscape and water feature awards at the local, state, national and international level.

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Co-op-etition
The art of cooperating with your competition in a niche market

by Brian Ellefson, Columbia Water Gardens

O K, so what exactly is “co-op-etition”? (And don’t run off to check your dictionary, because you won’t find it in there.) I would define it as having a healthy working relationship with your competition.

Coming from both the automotive and auto body industry, I can tell you that working with your competition in most industries is unheard of. And let’s face it: almost any business, in any industry, has more than enough competition. Just try to put gas in your car, swing through a drive-thru or even decide on a cell phone provider and you’ll see that we have choices. Competition is everywhere.

So how do we not only survive in a very competitive niche industry, like koi ponds and water features, but thrive? How do we possibly even expand and grow our business?

As I mentioned before, I came from the automotive industry which is well known for having too many people that lack integrity, character and good business sense. Too many shops speak negatively about other shops and tear them down in order to make a sale. The more you can convince your customer how evil your competitor is, the better it makes you look, right? Sadly, too many people believe that philosophy.

Thankfully, I have not seen that in “ponding.” In fact, that’s what I love so much about this industry: the people. I have met so many helpful, kind and friendly people in this business — people that are passionate about what they do, whether it be building, sales or service. These people are usually willing to give advice and take time, giving you educated opinions that tend to be profitable.

Good philosophy
One good philosophy to build your business is to...
"under-promise and over-deliver." For example, if you tell a customer that you estimate the price of an item will be $100 and should be delivered in four days, how happy are they when it shows up in 3 days and only costs $80? If you under-promise, you won’t get into trouble. If you over-deliver, you will reap the benefit of a happy customer who will remember the service you provided.

It goes the same for suppliers and vendors as well. Upon Columbia Water Gardens’ inception, Bill at Mystic Koi & Water Gardens in Upland, Calif., spent many hours of his time advising and counseling. This competitor also volunteered to train one of the new company’s employees. Some would say that is not good business, but I am here to disagree with that! I have personally witnessed the benefits of working with your competition, nurturing a healthy business relationship and open communication with them. If you or your competition has information that helps the industry, your customer, or you, how can you not share it? I have personally seen. The more we spoke, the more clear it became that I should be the one to write this article! Who better to write an article about “co-op-etition,” we started talking about all the different aspects of how it works and how it can benefit all parties involved. I was excited to discuss this topic and share what I have personally seen. The more we spoke, the more clear it became that I should be the one to write this article! Who better to write about this than someone who is relatively new to the industry, has seen it work first-hand, and went from just being “happy to have a customer” to someone who loves what he does for a living? It was exciting to discuss this topic and share what I have personally seen. The more we spoke, the more clear it became that I should be the one to write this article! Who better to write about this than someone who is relatively new to the industry, has seen it work first-hand, and went from just being “happy to have a customer” to someone who loves what he does for a living? It was exciting to discuss this topic and share what I have personally seen.

Healthy “co-op-etition”

If more businesses modeled healthy “co-op-etition,” I believe we could all benefit. I would sure rather see my friend down the road get the sale than some huge Internet company that is only providing a low cost. And let’s not forget that when a customer buys from one of those huge Internet giants and has a problem, who does she call? You guessed it: us! (Or perhaps our competition.) We are not a computer or a drop-shopper — indeed, we are so much more. My boss (and very close personal friend) and I have even given out our personal cell phone numbers to customers. Does Amazon or eBay do that? I don’t think so!

Return investment

Speaking of competition, if our competition is cooperating with me in return, they will send me business as well. I have seen that happen on more than one occasion. I make the sale and they keep their customer. Everybody wins. If I can effectively communicate with our competition and discuss market trends, pricing, industry concerns and what works and what doesn’t, we both benefit. If our competition tried something and it did not work, let’s discuss it! What went wrong? Is it as simple as price? Or, if we can we bounce ideas off each other, maybe both of us can offer the same or similar service and figure out a way that we can both benefit. We all know that two minds are better than one.

When my boss told me this morning that he was planning to write an article about “co-op-etition,” we started talking about all the different aspects of how it works and how it can benefit all parties involved. I was excited to discuss this topic and share what I have personally seen. The more we spoke, the more clear it became that I should be the one to write this article! Who better to write about this than someone who is relatively new to the industry, has seen it work first-hand, and went from just being “happy to have a job” to someone who loves what he does for a living? The pond industry may seem a little “fishy” at times, but let’s not be “koi”… our business is much better when we can all work together, have some fun, make some money and create loyal friends — and satisfied customers — along the way.

About the Author

Brian Ellefson is the manager of Columbia Water Gardens in Hemet, Calif. He originally started in the automotive industry as a mechanic. When Brian’s good friend Carl Petite (Owner of Columbia Water Gardens) needed someone to “watch the store” for a couple hours while he took off to handle a “pond emergency,” Brian was there to help out. What started out as a few hours on that first Saturday two years ago has now transformed not only into full-time work, but also a proud role as Store Manager of Columbia Water Gardens.
Stormwater ponds exist in communities and commercial properties everywhere. They are designed to capture excess water runoff from the land and impervious surfaces surrounding them. In 2009, the small state of Maryland had approximately 18,000 wet stormwater ponds covering 200,000 acres. These bodies of water generally contain high levels of nutrients and other pollutants. In some instances, stormwater ponds are simply a collection vessel for water that is void of plant material. This is because the surrounding plants are mowed to the water’s edge and any volunteer plants are treated with herbicides and subject to recurring or persistent algae blooms.

Algae can become toxic if incoming nutrient levels are so high that regular algaecide treatments become ineffective at controlling the problem. Other ponds become sanctuaries for weeds like Phragmites and Cattails, which establish themselves via seeds blown in with the wind. When left untreated, they can become invasive. Both plants are relatively unattractive and have a tendency to collect windblown trash, rendering them very unsightly.

One of the biggest problems with stormwater ponds is sediment runoff, which carries much of the unwanted pollutants from excess fertilizer, animal waste and organic matter into the pond. This is problematic not only because the pollutants contribute to high nutrient levels, but also because soil sediments collect in the pond bottom, reducing the depth of the pond over time. Shallower water also encourages nuisance algae growth that can form dense mats and become ugly. In some cases the sediments will need to be dredged, and it can be difficult to find a location willing to take such nutrient-laden sediments.

Educating landowners is critical to the process of stormwater pond improvement. A lot of the excess nutrients come from fertilizer runoff. More often than not, topsoil is harvested from construction sites prior to building. This generally leaves behind a soil that is depleted of organic matter and full of clay. Applied chemical fertilizers don’t stand a chance at being absorbed into the soil; during rain events a majority is washed off into the stormwater pond.

A change of thinking is necessary, with the emphasis being placed on amending soil rather than repeated applications of fertilizer. Improved soil leads to better nutrient uptake by lawns and gardens, thereby reducing the amount that ends up in stormwater ponds.

Fowling the Water

Geese and ducks are lovely to look at, but they contribute heavily to the amount of nutrients in a pond. Large populations can generate enough waste to severely debilitate a water body through nutrient loading. Discouraging their presence will improve water quality, and a heavily planted shoreline will eliminate the feeling of safe harbor for the birds. Wildfowl are hesitant to penetrate thick vegetation for fear that

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predators may be lurking, so eliminating easy access to the pond is an excellent deterrent.

Because water attracts wildlife, stormwater ponds can also become home to insects, fish, frogs, birds and various other living things in abundance. The ecological diversity can add interest, with birds nesting, frogs croaking and bees and butterflies in flight. This often contributes to the ponds becoming a focal point to the surrounding homes and businesses — as long as they are properly maintained.

A recent study indicates that residents are inclined to believe their property values are 15 to 25 percent higher if they are near a well-managed pond. It would be important to consider what they might perceive the reduction in property value to be if the pond is unattractively due to weed and algae growth and has a rancid odor. In the late ‘80s, Ruppert Landscape compared two apartment complexes. Each had a stormwater pond, and they shared the same entrance and were of the same design. One pond was beautified and the other remained a traditional stormwater pond. The complex with the beautified pond had a waiting list while the other had consistent vacancies.

Well-maintained ponds will also illicit community involvement. Residents will be more inclined to make visual inspections and make reports to grounds committee members for repairs and improvements. Based on experience, they will request new plants and encourage new projects.

Aquatic and moisture-loving plants, trees and shrubs combine to create background and surface reflections. Colorful hybrid water lilies are the best choice for the shallow edge of the pond. They provide shade and surface coverage without taking over the pond, and they add season-long color.

Laying Down a Solution

The best way to establish an effective shoreline planting is Wetland Carpets. These are woven, biodegradable coir (coconut) fiber blankets, three feet by 15 feet in size, that are pre-planted to allow sufficient time for the plants to develop an ample root system.

Pre-planted Wetland Carpets are superior to direct shoreline planting for several reasons. First, wildfowl are curious by nature and have a habit of following behind the planting crew to sample what has been installed when planting standard plugs. Because the plants in a Wetland Carpet are well-rooted in the coir, geese and ducks have less of an opportunity to dislodge the plants before they become established in their new homes. The plants establish quickly because they are already rooted, so it gives them a competitive advantage.

Cattail and Phragmites seedlings germinate on the moist banks and not in the water. The added benefit of the Wetland Carpet is that the unwanted seedlings cannot penetrate the thickness of the coir, so they don’t have the ability to re-establish before the preferred plant material fills in. Any seedlings that pop up on the soil side of the Carpet can be spot-treated with herbicide to prevent their return.

Plant collections can be custom-grown to suit the location, water depths and native requirements.
Plants with the greatest nutrient uptake ability can be combined with other favorable plant material to maximize the benefits of the planted shoreline. In some instances beautification is the primary goal, but regardless of the initial goal, adding a well-planted perimeter to any water body will be an asset. Shoreline planting will help to improve defunct stormwater ponds, reduce nutrient loads, reduce dangerous erosion, improve water quality and clarity, improve ecological diversity, deter some unwanted residents like geese, increase property values and improve your bottom line.

About the Author
Kelly Billing has over 25 years’ experience in the water gardening industry wholesale trade working for Maryland Aquatic Nurseries, Inc. She compiled and maintains the Aquatic Plant Invasive Species List for the nursery trade in the United States. She writes regularly for various trade magazines and other water gardening publications. A gardener since childhood, Kelly enthusiastically shares her knowledge and experience with organizations, garden centers and garden clubs.

Approximately 30 days later, bold foliage and color result.
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- Order individually or in a three piece kit

Kits Include:
- Your choice of real basalt columns - five heights available
- EasyPro basin
- Pump and plumbing kit
- LED lighting kit for a stunning night time display

6 Easy Steps For Installing Tranquil Décòr Basalts

1. Dig hole, compact ground under basin
2. Install basin, level and backfill
3. Place basalts, using shims provided to level
4. Install pump into basin and plumb columns
5. Install LED lights
6. Fill basin with water, landscape and enjoy!

Due to natural characteristics of basalts - the size, weight and number of sides will vary

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Success in selling to customers who own large ponds is often based on improving the water quality and nutrient management to increase their recreational enjoyment. But have you ever considered selling on the basis of customers growing their own food? Consumers knowing where their food was grown has energized farm markets across the country and revitalized the family practice of gardening. But what about fresh fish? The majority of seafood consumed in our country is imported from locations that may not enforce the same quality standards that exist in our country.

Think about your customers who have large ponds and have bought just about everything they need. The one thing they’re missing: a simple system to grow their own fresh fish in a clean environment. Would they be interested? I think so ... especially if you provide them with a new opportunity to interact with their ponds every day. This is a great family activity, and nobody has to pull any weeds.

Pen-raising (also known as cage-culturing) is a common aquaculture practice. On a large scale, there are offshore systems for salmon and even bluefin tuna. On a small scale, there are pens used to keep bait fish healthy until you find some time to go fishing again. In the middle, we have been providing customers with a package that includes a plastic mesh pen, a small aerator with air diffuser, a scoop net, a brush, fish food in a container and good instructions. The response has been fantastic and the results quite tasty.

Pen-raising

Using your pond to raise fish for the dinner table

Rainbow Trout will grow one inch a month if fed daily. Start with six- to eight-inch fish in March and enjoy a fresh fish harvest in the fall.

Included in our package is a linear aeration kit with a 2.0 CFM output and enough weighted hose to allow the diffuser to be attached to the bottom of the cage. The compressor noise is not obtrusive and the bubble action rising up through the pen keeps the fish healthy, especially if the diameter, constructed of black HDPE mesh. This pen can produce more than 100 pounds of trout, pantfish, catfish, hybrid bass, yellow perch or bullheads. It’s possible to grow two different species of fish in the same pen or add a pile of crayfish for a late summer boil. The plastic mesh material provides better abrasion resistance when compared to nylon netting and more underwater protection from turtles, who also enjoy a fish buffer. Catfish or bullheads are less likely to get their barbed fins stuck in plastic netting than in nylon netting, and algae is easier to brush off to maintain water passing through the pen. Pens that have a PVC framework provide additional flotation in case a dock is not available for attachment, but these should be removed for winter if ice conditions could cause damage. One important suggestion: please check the state regulations governing fish stocking before buying fish from a supplier and setting up a fish pen for your customers.

Fish pens are available in a variety of sizes and materials. When selecting which one to purchase, consider the type of fish or critter being raised as well as the environment. We use a round pen that is four feet tall and three feet in diameter, constructed of black HDPE mesh. This pen can produce more than 100 pounds of trout, pantfish, catfish, hybrid bass, yellow perch or bullheads. It’s possible to grow two different species of fish in the same pen or add a pile of crayfish for a late summer boil. The plastic mesh material provides better abrasion resistance when compared to nylon netting and more underwater protection from turtles, who also enjoy a fish buffer. Catfish or bullheads are less likely to get their barbed fins stuck in plastic netting than in nylon netting, and algae is easier to brush off to maintain water passing through the pen. Pens that have a PVC framework provide additional flotation in case a dock is not available for attachment, but these should be removed for winter if ice conditions could cause damage. One important suggestion: please check the state regulations governing fish stocking before buying fish from a supplier and setting up a fish pen for your customers.

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POND Sources is the new industry directory for the garden pond and water feature industry. We offer different membership packages, each of which will feature your business in our directory and boost your business potential. These packages range in price and features depending on the exposure you desire for your business. Currently we are offering a limited-time Gold Fall Special that will allow you access to all of the features provided by our Gold membership plan for $99.00 (regularly $149.99)! This offer expires Dec. 13, 2013. Check out www.pondsources.com today.
stocking density is high and feeding occurs several times a day. We have customers who keep their pens ice-free during the winter and harvest rainbow trout for Friday fish fries.

Two other items that are very helpful are a scoop net and a long-handled brush. The net is used for removing the fish during growth measurements, removing dead fish (it happens) and capturing fish to compliment those garden-fresh vege-
tables. The net that you supply should have a handle long enough to reach the bottom of the pen and a coated net material if catfish or bullheads are being raised to reduce the time spent in the fun task of untangling them.

The fish food and the container that protects it are important elements of the system and create a positive experience for the customer. To sell a customer on the idea of growing fish in her pond, you need to promote interaction. This interaction is ideal when feeding the fish is fun and not a chore. Placing the weatherproof container of fish food near the pond is better than having to carry a bucket from the shed or garage each time.

The science behind feeding pen-raised fish starts with selecting food that satisfies the nutritional requirements of the fish being raised. Trout grow faster when fed a higher protein level (example: 45 percent) but catfish, yellow perch, tilapia and sunfish do just fine with 32 to 35 percent protein level food.

Floating food or sinking food is another choice that should be considered based on the feeding habits of the fish. Some fish are more sensitive to light conditions due to their eye structure and grow best when fed a sinking food. The problem is that you cannot monitor how much food is consumed (and it’s not as fun to watch).

The fish food you use should have a guaranteed analysis that shows it is not older than 90 days from the date of manufacturing. Old food or moldy food should not be used. It may cost a little more to provide a higher quality fish food, but the results are better. Encourage your customers to feed the fish at least twice a day, as frequent feeding results in faster-growing fish. The amount of food to use is a general calculation based upon 5 percent of the fish’s body weight. For example, if you stock the fish pen with 100 trout that each weigh about 10 ounces, the amount of food to start feeding with should equal 50 ounces. If your customer feeds the fish twice a day, each time 25 ounces of food should be used. It is best to supply pellet-trained fish of at least eight inches in length. Under ideal conditions they will grow about one inch per month when the water temperature is above 50 degrees. Stop by once a month to check the size of the fish and adjust the feeding ratio if necessary. This could be a service that you provide along with another bag of food.

If we put this idea in motion, you will soon be selling your customers an outdoor experience that allows them more interaction with their ponds (which they enjoy), an activity to share with family or friends and the option to harvest a supply of delicious fish. By promoting the experience more than the components of a package, you’ll soon find that your customers are thrilled even if they forget to feed the fish every day.

About the Author
Jim Kennedy has been actively involved with aquaculture and the water garden industry since 1989. He is the owner of National Pond Service and its production component, Willow Pond Aqua Farms.

This circular fish pen is 36 inches in diameter and stands 48 inches tall. The largest crop of fish we have produced in this style of pen was 275 pounds of black bullheads, which are delicious.
Historical Asagi
Indigo color, classic beauty

by Taro Kodama,
Kodama Koi Farm

In Japanese, the word asagi refers to a light indigo color. So when we appreciate the unique beauty of the Asagi variety of koi, it’s obvious where the name came from. Although Asagi may seem to be a plain koi at first, this beautiful fish plays a very important role in the history of koi.

When I think about how a black carp turned into more than 100 different varieties of koi over several hundreds of years, I cannot help but be surprised and impressed with the talent, patience and craftsmanship of the people who made it possible. They lived in a very small area of Japan, in the villages of Ojiya and Yamakoshi.

As the original ancestors of koi, black carp were a food source for those people. But while the people of these small towns raised the carp, something interesting happened: the fish started showing some colors, such as blue and red, by mutation.

Of these early black carp, Asagi was the first colorful variety developed — and from then on, Asagi became the origin of all the beautiful koi we enjoy today.

It is very interesting to study how Kohaku was developed from Asagi. Today, living proof that Kohaku was developed from Asagi exists in living fish like the one in the photo above. Just like her, Asagi has characteristics of turning indigo blue to white on the body. Since the variety is fixed nowadays, you won’t see this phenomenon a lot ... but have consistent and beautiful indigo, and each should be laid out perfectly.

Hi pattern
Unlike most koi, Asagi has a pattern on its side. Hi on the cheek is called yakko, and yakko is very important to their sides. When I was in Japan, Mr. Hosokai, a top Asagi breeder, said that he looked only at yakko when calling babies. He said if a koi had no hi pattern, although there was no hi on the side, he would keep it because hi would develop later on. He also said he would pull our babies with no yakko no matter how excellent their amime quality was.

Asagi is an important variety, and a great deal of breeders breed them. But I usually go to only a few breeders for the quality of their Asagi. Otsuka Koi Farm is excellent, and Hosokai Koi Farm is an established farm of Asagi as well. Finally, Oya Koi Farm produces truly amazing beauty. A few of his grown-up Asagi have a tint of ginrin on every scale. The beauty is beyond description.

Marketing Asagi can sometimes be challenging because it is not that fancy — especially to beginners. But it is also true that the more you study, the more you get addicted. Thus, it is imperative to teach your clients the historical meaning and importance of this koi and show them how to appreciate the classic beauty. Then you will enjoy the moment when, all of a sudden, Asagi becomes a “must-have” variety in your client’s pond.

About the Author
Taro Kodama — 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, provide not only winning show koi, but they also conduct many koi seminars.
Get Fit for the Fight!
Fun and knowledge flow freely at Pondemonium 2013

by Jennifer Zuri,
Aquascape

Hundredds of distributors, contractors and retailers from around the world came together for education, networking and fun at the industry’s premier water gardening event, Pondemonium 2013, held August 22 through 24 in St. Charles, Ill. This year’s theme was “Get Fit for the Fight” and offered workshops and hands-on training sessions designed to instruct attendees about creating healthy business and personal habits.

The event kicked off with four hands-on training sessions held at Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo, which included an advanced build for Certified Aquascape Contractors only. Attendees could choose whether to participate in a fountain, basic pond or pondless waterfall installation.

Friday’s classroom sessions started with keynote presentations from Greg Wittstock, CEO and Founder of Aquascape, Inc., and Friday’s keynote was given by Ed Beaulieu, director of contractor development and field research for Aquascape. In addition, a special presentation on how to build a million-dollar water feature business was given by Steven Shinholser of Premier Ponds in Burtonsville, Md.

“Cup of Coffee” roundtable discussions were once again led by a variety of water feature contractors and retailers on both Friday and Saturday morning. Topics ranged from business to marketing to construction techniques.

Networking events were offered throughout Pondemonium and included a pond tour and a fundraising event at TopGolf in Wood Dale, Ill., to benefit the Aquascape Foundation. The annual Blow-Out Bash dinner brought the event to a close on Saturday night and included Ed’s Beer Garden, poker games and a bags tournament.

Recipients of awards presented at Pondemonium 2013 included:
- Businessman of the Year presented to Steve Shinholser of Premier Ponds in Burtonsville, Md.
- Artist of the Year presented to John Adams of Modern Design Aquascaping in Friendsville, Tenn.
- Sustainability Award presented to Fred Pape of Aquascape, Inc.

Plans are already underway for Pondemonium 2014, which will be held in St. Charles, Ill. from August 21 to 23. For future updates, visit www.pondemonium.com.

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John Adams of Modern Design Aquascaping in Friendsville, Tenn.
Buying for Business  
Making smart capital purchases  
by Mark E. Battersby, Contributing Writer  

Much has been said and written about the stalled U.S. economy. Many attribute the reluctance of small businesses to expand and add workers to an uncertain tax and regulatory climate. Others blame the failure of businesses to grow on the often debunked belief that financing is neither affordable nor available. Regardless of how valid the hurdles appear, however, those in the pond business may still need to make capital purchases. Fortunately, there are tools that can help every pond business owner or manager decide whether or not to commit to capital purchases. Best of all, most decision-making processes involve relatively simple analysis and often factor in economic uncertainty. Even in the best of times it can be difficult to decide whether to make capital purchases. Although there is no precise or standard definition, there are a number of mathematical formulas falling under the heading of “Cost Benefit Analysis” that are frequently used when deciding whether to purchase capital assets. These formulas usually summarize both the positive and the negative impacts of a particular transaction and then weigh them against each other.  

THE COST OF OWNERSHIP: To discover how much it costs to own any business asset, a Cost of Ownership analysis is designed specifically to find the lifetime costs of acquiring, operating and changing something. TCO analysis is not a complete cost benefit analysis, but a tool to decide whether or not an investment is justified.  

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI): Everyone who makes an investment expects a return at some point. Someone who invests in an education, for example, may be doing so to have a good job in the future. A business and/or its owner usually invests to help the operation grow, expand or, in many cases, merely survive. The easiest tool for analyzing a business investment is a computation of the Rate of Return (ROI) on that investment. An ROI analysis compares the magnitude and timing of investment gains directly with the magnitude and timing of investment costs. A high ROI means that investment gains compare favorably to investment costs. One serious problem with using ROI as the sole basis for decision-making is that ROI by itself says nothing about the likelihood that expected returns and costs will be as predicted. After all, ROI by itself says nothing about the “risk” of an investment. ROI simply shows how returns compare to costs if the action or investment produces the results hoped for. For that reason, proper investment analysis should also measure the probabilities of different ROI outcomes. Wise pond professionals will consider both the ROI magnitude and the risks that go with it.  

FINANCIAL JUSTIFICATION: Financial justification analyzes whether or not an investment is justified — in financial terms. In other words, financial justification helps a pond professional decide whether or not to go forward with a proposed action. The results of a financial justification analysis address questions like these:  
- Does the proposed purchase represent the best use of funds?  
- Can the proposed new purchase be used to improve the pond operation’s financial position?  
- Will the proposed purchase, security, legal, accounting, or other service “pay for itself”?  

Financial justification is distinguished from other types of analysis only by the special emphasis on financial decision criteria. Just which criteria determine justification in a particular situation depend heavily on the pond operation’s objectives and the current business situation.  

PAYBACK PERIOD: A basic analytic approach, often referred to as “net present value,” asks the question of how and how long it will take for the newly acquired equipment, services or business property to pay for itself. Quite simply, a factor equal to the operation’s cost of capital is applied to the expected cash flows from the new equipment, system, property or asset. Under this approach early returns from the investment are usually more valuable than later returns. The net present value approach or some variation is generally the best method of selecting an investment.
method to analyze an investment. All cash flows are accounted for including any salvage value expected when the newly acquired business asset is eventually disposed of or sold, along with negative cash flows (e.g., high repair costs in later years of the property’s useful life).

The Payback Period Method has long been used for a quick, cheap and “dirty” analysis. In today’s current economic climate it can make sense since it inherently takes into account risk — particularly the risk several years out. It can be very useful for investments in fast-changing technology. A good example would be a piece of equipment that may be obsolete or where a significant upgrade should be available in a couple of years.

A Helping Hand from Taxes

Taxes obviously play a role in all capital purchases. Under our tax laws, businesses have long been entitled to deduct a reasonable allowance for the exhaustion, wear and tear of equipment and property used in a trade or business, or for property held for the production of income. Recovering the cost of capital assets via annual depreciation deductions over what our lawmakers have set as its “useful life” has been augmented with alternative write-offs. Whether the Section 179 write-off that allows up to $500,000 in newly acquired equipment and other business property to be “expensed” and written off in the year acquired, or the so-called “bonus depreciation” allowance allowing 50 percent of capital purchases to be written off will continue after the 2013 tax year is debatable at this time. While they continue, they result in significantly smaller cash outlays for the capital purchases for every profitable pond business.

Buy/Lease Conundrum

A garden pond professional short on cash might also want to consider leasing rather than buying. Leasing offers real advantages, including reduced cash outflows. A short list of leasing advantages includes:

- Conventional bank loans usually require more money up front than leasing.
- Leasing generally requires only one or two payments up front in lieu of the substantial down payments often required to purchase equipment.
- Unlike some financing options, leasing offers 100% financing. That means a pond business can acquire essential operating equipment and begin using it immediately to generate revenues with no money down.

Financing, Not Brain Surgery

Interest rates remain close to their historical lows but financing for many businesses continues to be elusive. One problem: lower interest rates have translated into lenders and investors being more selective. However, often thought of as a lender of last resort, the U.S. government is actually an excellent source for a wide variety of economical financing. Some government loans, particularly

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While borrowers must apply through a participating bank or lending institution, the SBA guarantees up to $750,000 or 75 percent of the total amount, whichever is less. For loans under $100,000, the guarantee usually tops out at 80 percent of the total loan.

504 LOAN PROGRAM: At the top end of the SBA loan size spectrum are the 504 Loan Programs that provide long-term, fixed-rate loans for financing fixed assets, usually real estate and equipment. 504 loans of up to $750,000 are usually made through Certified Development Companies (CDCs) — nonprofit intermediaries that work with the SBA, banks and businesses looking for financing.

Capital Purchases

As already mentioned, every pond professional will face situations where there is no need for a formal analysis ... although generally, the numbers should be run before deciding whether a capital purchase is warranted. Sometimes, particularly with changes in technology, the savings are obvious. However, no business property, equipment or asset should be replaced just because it has failed. After all, it may no longer be needed or the technology may have changed.

Information about the ratios and formulas used in formal analysis is widely available on the Internet and in print. There are even widely-distributed software programs that quickly perform this analysis. Not too surprisingly, however, the assistance of a qualified professional is highly recommended when deciding on any capital purchase.

Mark Batterby has over 25 years of experience in the fields of taxes and finances. Although no reputable professional should render advice at arm’s length, he does craft unbiased, interesting, informative and accurate articles. He writes articles and columns for several trade magazines, and has authored four books.

This bit of wisdom has been attributed to Will Rogers, Oscar Wilde and Mark Twain. Regardless of the origins of the quote, it continues to ring true in most facets of life — including your business.

I suspect that most of you who are reading this are the best at what you do in your area. Why do I think that? Because you take the time to read about your industry. That shows you care, and those who care become the best. But do your potential customers know you care? Do they know you’re the best?

I’m in a position where I work with both contractors and homeowners on a daily basis, so I hear about what some of these first impressions are like. Most of the complaints I hear about water feature contractors (note that this does not include lawn companies that built a pond once) are not about the quality of the work done. They are about simple business practices that were not handled as well as they should have been. These are “first impression” issues.

Often it is that very first phone call. The homeowner has gotten a referral from a friend about you. You roll up at 11:20 without so much as a phone call, do you think he will be comfortable hiring you?

These first points of contact are critical to each job and to business success in general. I know many contractors who will feel that this may hit a little close to home. They are great artisans and do work that is simply amazing. If hired they will rarely, if ever, disappoint their clients. But all too often, they never make it to that point.

In a small business, you have to be more than the talented water feature contractor. You are a professional and must represent professionalism. You must be a good business person. This starts with showing potential clients the respect they deserve. Only then can they be comfortable giving you the job that you deserve.

Erik Tate operates The Water Garden, LLC. The company was started in 1987 by his parents, Randall and Karen. Having grown up in the pond industry, a passion for water gardening became ingrained in who Erik is. Based in Chattanooga, Tenn., The Water Garden is a distributor of quality pond supplies.

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In all forms of business, owners should have a plan of action, and our industry is no different. To help avoid periodic pitfalls, a good business owner should have a series of checks and balances to assist with overcoming any potentially damaging issues or situations and track the success or failure of these issues from one project to the next. This can give you a great advantage in actually being successful.

Some businesses use S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) to help identify specific areas of focus, but I use the four O’s method that fits nicely with water feature design and installation. The four O’s are:

OVERVIEW – A generalized look at the project being proposed.

OBJECTIVES – A list of all of the goals you wish to achieve.

OBSTACLES – A detailed look at issues that may conflict with the project’s success.

OUTCOME – A final look at what was actually accomplished.

By recording and tracking these categories, we are able to look back and see what worked and what didn’t, as well as the associated costs of each step. This makes it quite clear how each area affected our profit or ability to stay in business.

Let’s take a closer look at a recently completed philanthropy project in Léogâne, Haiti following the devastating earthquake that occurred in early 2010.

OVERVIEW: The location of our project was a children’s hospital facility, where the staff wanted a low-maintenance landscape area installed just outside the children’s residential wing, providing a quiet place where children could escape the confines of their hospital stay and enjoy the pleasant aesthetics of nature. Prior to the installation of our project there was no formal landscape plan. Furthermore, the area was in the middle of the epicenter of the recent earthquake, which completely destroyed anything that may have previously existed. The area was also heavily looted after the disaster and anything of any useful value that was not firmly anchored was simply carted off and reused by anyone who could carry it. So anything not tied down was gone and the entire area looked like a war zone.

Nearly every building in this community was completely destroyed during the quake and the few buildings that remained were severely damaged and typically beyond use. Only one dormitory building was still habitable. There was a tremendous debris field to navigate en route to and from the project.

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Opposite page, left: The lack of Haitian resources has left many damaged buildings standing for so long that trees and shrubs have begun to grow from the debris. This page: The upper section of the water feature (top, right) provides interactive sights and sounds for the resident children. Staging the materials for this project (bottom, left) required moving everything into place by hand due to limited access. Grassy pathways (bottom, right) tracked too much organic material into the hospital facility, which lead to the eventual installation of an environmentally friendly, rubber-based, porous paving system.
site, and access to water and electrical sources was extremely limited.

Original plans were to give the children as many sights and sounds as possible to brighten the area and facilitate an enjoyable escape from the sterile clinical confines of their hospital rooms. Budgets can always be limiting, so it was decided to keep this area as low-maintenance as possible to avoid or reduce future operational expenses and maintenance costs.

**OBJECTIVES:** The plan, as presented to PONDS for PEACE, was to have a relatively small, landscaped safe zone, confined from outside access in order to provide as much security for the children as possible. A water feature was planned that would allow for a soothing sound flowing in and around the garden area. A permeable nature trail was to be installed to allow for easy access to the garden while without issues of soil or other organic matter being tracked into the hospital facility. The addition of a custom-designed Wind Harp would provide a soft melody flowing throughout the garden area each time the wind blew. Plants were selected by a group of landscapers and included a variety of donated plant material from around the region as well as a large donation from the U.S. that would give a nice appearance to the garden while remaining as low-maintenance as possible. All plants were selected to handle the localized conditions of temperature and moisture.

**OBSTACLES:** There were several serious obstacles that had to be overcome in order to complete this project, one of which was access. It had been more than three years since the earthquake, yet damaged build-
ings and huge piles of garbage and debris still remained everywhere. The government of Haiti did not have the resources to haul these tremendous mountains of debris away; even if they did, there was nowhere to take it because there was such a massive amount of it — and it was everywhere! To make matters worse, every conceivable area that was free of debris was being utilized for housing the untold numbers of homeless people in the dozens of tent camps that dotted the area. At times, there was not even enough room for a vehicle to pass through some areas. More than half of the area roads were still impassable or virtually nonexistent, and many others were washed out and rutted with deep trenches because the damaged asphalt was in a serious state of deteriora-
tion. In many places it was difficult to maneuver without the assistance of all-wheel drive. The heavy influx of vehicles and trucks only added to the poor road conditions as they deliv-
ered much-needed supplies to various areas. We considered ourselves lucky if our vehicles reached a top speed of more than 10 miles per hour.

The electrical grid was obvi-
ously damaged as well, and most of the available power was being utilized for critical or urgent needs. This made it impractical to use any type of power tools or equipment without the added expense of a generator. All the work was conducted using good old-fashioned manual labor.

Water lines were being repaired as quickly as possible, but the extensive damage to the old, existing water lines was creating a serious delay. This resulted in our nearest and only active water supply being nearly 500 yards away. The water to the actual hospital facility had already been repaired, but the water pres-
ture was so low that we were not allowed to access this source for our construction, installation or clean-up needs.

Support in the area were either simply not available or ridiculously high-priced, which meant that most if not all of our necessary materials and compo-
ients had to be shipped in from outside the country.

**OUTCOME:** The project, however, came together without any unreasonable delays and culminated in a beautifully mean-
dering stream, 47 feet in length and dropping approximately five feet in total elevation with multi-
ple distinctive waterfalls scattered throughout the area. The system is powered by an Atlantic High-Volume PAF Series Tidal Wave Direct Drive Pump that sends nearly 6,000 gallons cours-
ing through three-inch, flexible, smooth-wall PVC every hour.

The entire system, confined within a 45-foot radius, was designed by PondGard rubber liner from Firestone Specialty Products, is surrounded by three tandem dump truck loads of clean topsoil.
There’s no place like home
Building a pond for koi

by Conrad Kleinholz, PhD, Kleinholz Koi Farm

A commitment to build a pond for koi does not mean we have to build a koi pond.

The statement is not a contradiction. Many people have the idea that koi ponds have vertical walls, are at least six feet deep and must be built from concrete to avoid collapse. The problem with concrete ponds is that they do, or will, leak without an additional water barrier. We all know concrete ponds are also very expensive. So let’s build a liner pond with a few modifications. Think of this as an in-pond extension of Rick Bartel’s RISE method for landscaping waterfalls and pond edging.

The surface layout is the same as any other pond we build. However, this kind of pond requires much more advance planning before we start to dig. With the realization that the pond can have different wall slopes and depths, we should plan where everything goes before we dig. There is still room for plant shelves, and at least one shelf is a good idea for access when in-pond maintenance is needed. The shelves should be two to three feet deep to discourage visiting raccoons and herons. The rest of the side walls can have slopes between 3:1 and 2:1, with the steeper slopes saved for tighter soils. The surface is big enough to avoid head loss and small enough to minimize any wave distortion. Surface skimmers can accomplish the same or even greater drainage effects from bacterial growth and line blockage. A four-inch drain line will allow you to expand a modular filter system without adding another drain. If the pond is designed properly, a single drain is sufficient. I like to use rigid pipe under the liner to reduce friction loss. If your plan calls for an aeration disk, using it as part of a domed drain is a good idea. You can accomplish the same or even greater drain efficiency by directing water flow to the drain with wall slopes or placement of boulders. A boulder in line with water flow will cause an eddy on the back side that can be used to concentrate solids. Use the rock to hide a drain on the back side where the solids collect.

Don’t fill the pond bottom with rocks. They don’t look any more natural than the rock necklace does around the pond perimeter. We want to create a series of unique views within the pond and that is best done with individual rocks. When we don’t fill the pond bottom with rocks, we don’t have to dismantle the pond to keep it clean. The nasty sediment that pond owners don’t like and don’t want to see doesn’t accumulate, either. Without a rock-covered liner, we have the opportunity to make every pond unique. Use single boulders, cast or natural branches, or statuary to create focal points in the pond that complement the surrounding landscaping. They will also tend to provide areas where the fish congregate when they swim through the pond. Guess where you install the seating in the landscaping? With single or grouped underwater structures, we can also employ underwater lighting to better advantage, rather than just putting light into the water. We can

PART 2

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Membrane diffusers

All koi ponds should have supplemental aeration. Membrane diffusers are the state of the art. They do a great job and don’t need much maintenance. Some pond owners complain that they need to turn them off when they are viewing the fish pondside because the bubbles and currents interfere with observing the fish. Contrary to common practice, the diffusers do not need to be placed in the middle of the pond for proper benefit. The entire water body will circulate and deliver oxygen throughout the pond. To avoid observation problems, put the diffusers on the back side of the pond, behind a waterfall. Use modular filtration systems for the bioreactors. You can reduce up-front construction costs and the system can be expanded as needed when the fish grow or more are added to the pond. Protein skimmers or shower filters are really nice for removing foam from the water and reducing the amount of replacement water. For ponds over 5,000 gallons, I recommend multiple ultraviolet lights. Then when one quits the owners will see a reduction in clarity, but not catastrophic greening. If the owners want to use ionizers instead, make sure there is at least 75 ppm alkalinity in the water at all times to avoid chronic copper toxicity to the fish. If the fish stop eating or become uncomfortable, be sure to stop using the ionizer. I hope the above ideas are helpful for all of us. My conversations with pond owners all seem to lead to two topics: how can I make my fish look better, and how can I find a way to reduce the maintenance so I have more time to enjoy the fish? In every instance that a conversation began with “I used to have a pond, but it was too much trouble,” none of the people complained about the pond or the fish, but always about the associated maintenance with ponds that had rock bottoms or filters that were difficult and/or messy to maintain. Like the fish we put in our ponds, unique ponds help installers build reputations that translate to increased sales, especially if those ponds are low-maintenance. You sell more ponds, we sell more fish.

Use external pumps

Save the submersibles for smaller goldfish ponds and water features. With a litter basket before the inlet, your days of leaf and frog removal from the intake screen are over. If the filter vaulks will be above ground, add a swing check valve below ground but outside the pond to keep the pump primed. Use modular filtration systems for the bioreactors. You can reduce up-front construction costs and the system can be expanded as needed when the fish grow or more are added to the pond. Protein skimmers or shower filters are really nice for removing foam from the water and reducing the amount of replacement water. For ponds over 5,000 gallons, I recommend multiple ultraviolet lights. Then when one quits the owners will see a reduction in clarity, but not catastrophic greening. If the owners want to use ionizers instead, make sure there is at least 75 ppm alkalinity in the water at all times to avoid chronic copper toxicity to the fish. If the fish stop eating or become uncomfortable, be sure to stop using the ionizer. I hope the above ideas are helpful for all of us. My conversations with pond owners all seem to lead to two topics: how can I make my fish look better, and how can I find a way to reduce the maintenance so I have more time to enjoy the fish? In every instance that a conversation began with “I used to have a pond, but it was too much trouble,” none of the people complained about the pond or the fish, but always about the associated maintenance with ponds that had rock bottoms or filters that were difficult and/or messy to maintain. Like the fish we put in our ponds, unique ponds help installers build reputations that translate to increased sales, especially if those ponds are low-maintenance. You sell more ponds, we sell more fish. Win-win!
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