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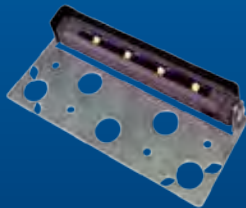
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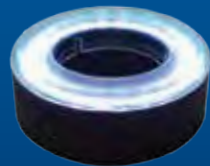
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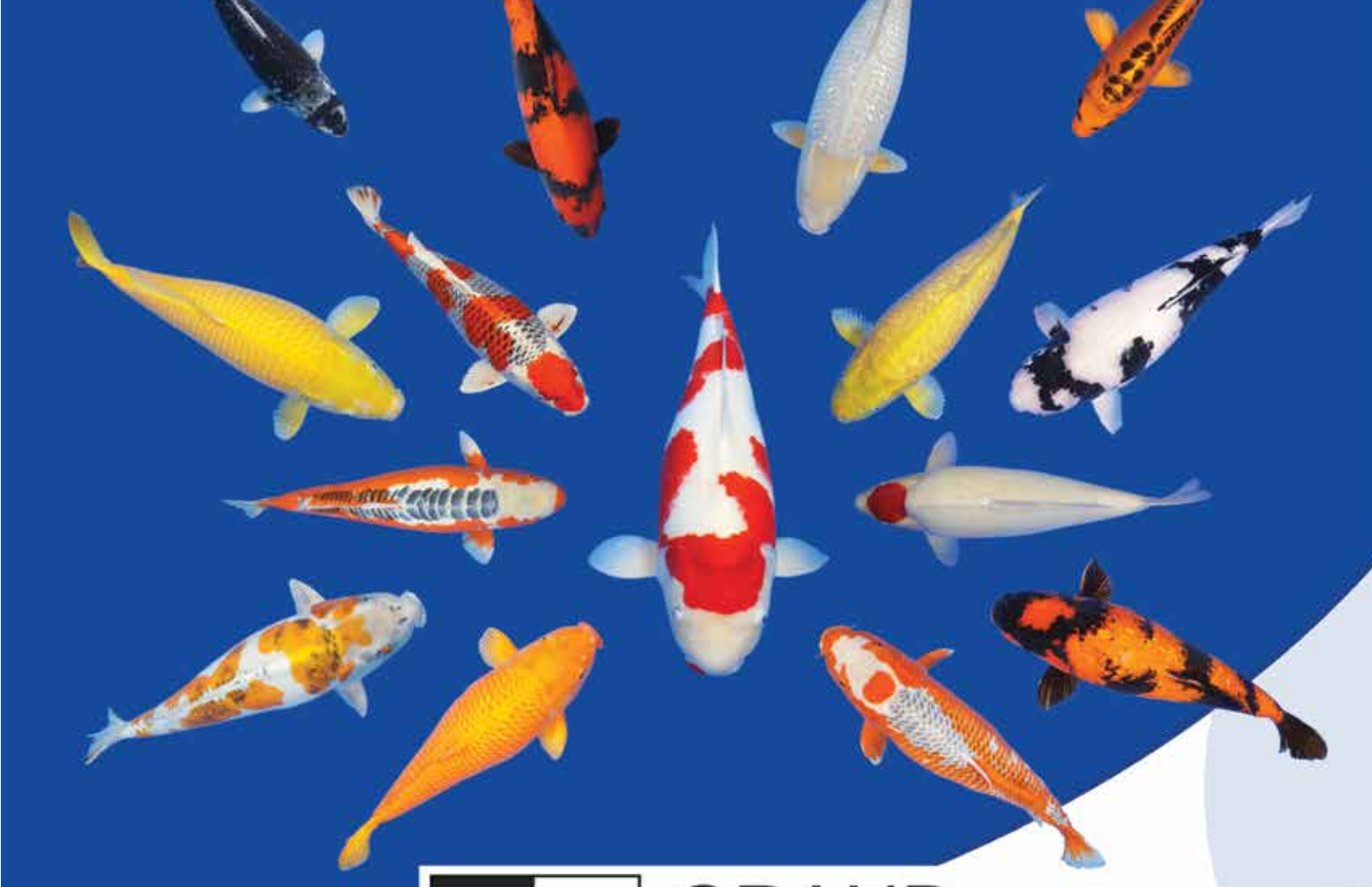
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### 15 Alternatives to Electricity

If your pond site doesn't have ready access to electricity, or if you're looking to save on energy costs, you might consider installing solar aeration. **Scott Finn** of Airmax discusses the pros and cons of relying on solar energy.

### 20 Start Your Engines!

We're launching a new feature that explores contractors' passions outside the pond and water-feature industry. **Benjamin Timmermans** kicks it off with a profile of the hobby that gets his engine running — antique car collecting!



### 27 APC 2023: 'Sailing Toward Success'

In October 2023, Atlantic-Oase invited industry professionals to its annual Professional Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, and **Demi Fortuna** was there to catch all the action. Check out the topics they covered this year and peruse the gallery to see some of your favorite contractors in action.

### 32 Sourcing the Perfect Rock COVER STORY

We are happy to welcome back the indelible **Dave Duensing** for this issue's cover story about selecting the perfect rocks as elements of art in your water features. Take a look at some of the beauties he has found over the years and learn some tips to apply in your own builds.

### 40 The Upsell Factor - Part Two LANGUAGE OF KOI

In part two of his two-part series, **Brian Fitzsimmons** of Fitz's Fish Ponds continues his exciting look at the benefits of sourcing koi directly from dealers in Japan. He also completes his business case for selling (and upselling) precious Japanese koi.

### 49 The Mile High Profit Summit

Being a great pond builder and a great business owner don't always go hand in hand, but thankfully there are plenty of business training opportunities out there to help you keep everything in order. **Paul Holdeman** shares some of the highlights of a Denver-based summit he's attended for the past three years in a row.

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# Upcoming Events

2024

**February 28 - March 1**

**Water Garden Expo**  
Firelake Grand Casino  
Shawnee, Oklahoma  
www.wgexpo.com

**March 8 - 10**

**Central Florida Koi and Goldfish Show**  
Avanti Palms Resort  
Orlando, Florida  
www.cfks.org

**March 23 - 24**

**All-American Koi Show Las Vegas**  
Silverton Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
www.allamericankoisshow.com

**March 26 - 28**

**National Hardware Show**  
Las Vegas Convention Center  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
www.nationalhardwareshow.com

**July 16 - 20**

**IWGS Symposium**  
Reading, England  
www.iwgs.org/symposium

**August 17 - 21**

**Pondemonium**  
Q Center  
St. Charles, Illinois  
www.aquascapeinc.com/professionals/  
pondemonium

**October 16 - 18**

**Hardscapes North America**  
Kentucky Exposition Center  
Louisville, Kentucky  
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Are you attending an event that you think others should know about? Are you hosting an event and want more people to come? Send event information to llgelles@pondtrademag.com.



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# Publisher's Perspective

## Happy New Year!

Here we are again! It's time for a fresh start and a brand new year as the calendar turns the page to 2024. It's also a Leap Year, which means we get an extra day in the office this year. What are your resolutions for 2024?



Here at POND Trade, we are excited to start off the new year with a new feature called "Beyond the Pond." Starting this issue, we will be featuring a series of pond builders' hobbies, pastimes and passions when they're not out working on ponds. We've been hearing for a long time that quite a few of you have some pretty fascinating interests outside our industry, so we are excited to dig

in and share them with our readers!

We are kicking it off with Benjamin Timmermans, who has a passion for collecting old Volkswagens (VWs) and pretty much everything associated with them. He regularly drives cross-country for a good find, and often at the drop of a hat. It doesn't stop there. He collects old trucks and signage and even has a 1950s Greyhound bus in his collection! I really got a kick out of his stories and photos, and as time moves on, I hope you all will enjoy learning more about your friends in the business and what they like to spend their time doing "Beyond the Pond!"

If you have a fear of heights, our cover photo might've given you goose bumps. Clearly, the "perfect rock" was chosen to stand on here ("Sourcing the Perfect Rock," pg. 32), but Dave's article goes way beyond that. We feature lots of rock-related articles in this magazine, but I think you'll get a lot out of what Dave has to say and show in his pictures. We also have an interesting piece from Scott Finn at Airmax ("Alternatives to Electricity," pg. 15) that discusses different power options for aerating a pond, especially when an electrical outlet isn't within reach.

If you'd like to be featured in a "Beyond the Pond" segment and write about one of your non-pond-related hobbies, feel free to contact me at [llgelles@pondtrademag.com](mailto:llgelles@pondtrademag.com). Happy New Year!

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# *Navigating the Waters*

Overcome the challenges of building a recreational pond

by **Ed Beaulieu,**

Aquascape, Inc.

In the quest for serenity and a connection with nature, many homeowners are turning to recreational ponds as a transformative addition to their outdoor spaces. These purposefully crafted bodies of water not only bring aesthetic appeal but also offer the ideal opportunity for interacting with water.

When you consider the actual definition of a recreational pond, most pond builders have been creating them for years. A recreational pond is simply a manmade body of water designed and constructed for leisure and recreational purposes, regardless of size.

Recreational ponds can serve various purposes, including fishing, swimming and providing a scenic and tranquil environment for relaxation. They are typically landscaped to enhance their natural beauty and often include features like decks, patios, bridges and aquatic vegetation. Building a recreational pond involves careful planning, construction and maintenance to ensure it meets both functional and aesthetic goals.

For this article, let's focus on recreational ponds specifically designed for swimming. Distinguished by their larger dimensions and increased depth compared to smaller backyard ponds, usually ranging from 2 to 3 feet deep, these swimming ponds require careful consideration of crucial factors due to their substantial size and extended construction duration.

## **Before You Start Digging**

First, make sure you have the skill set and experience to tackle an advanced project. Start with smaller ponds to help you understand the management of water. Once you've gotten your feet wet with small to medium ponds, you can scale up to larger ponds. One way to do this is to build smaller ponds that are deeper than a few feet, then move up to your recreational pond.

Consider establishing a recreational pond either in your own backyard or for someone you know. This approach not only reduces stress when addressing potential issues but also provides valuable hands-on experience. Collaborating with an



Be sure to plan a staging area for rocks and products when installing a recreational pond.





When designing a recreational pond, plan space for adjacent outdoor living areas and landscaping.

experienced pond builder well versed in installing larger ponds is also advisable.

### Planning & Design

The journey to a recreational pond begins with meticulous planning. Doing your homework prior to construction is an absolute must. There's a saying that states, "for every hour of planning, you save 20 hours of work." This couldn't be truer when crafting larger water features.

Create a design that complements the vision and surrounding environment. Factor in the size of the pond, depths and any additional features like waterfalls or rock formations. Also consider access points for human interaction. This could include a deck, patio, large flat boulders at the pond's edge for sitting and even stone steps leading down into the pond.

To make planning and construction easier, Aquascape offers two sizes

of recreational ponds in a kit format, which helps alleviate the stress of piecing components together. The smaller kit yields a 9-by-20-foot pond, while the larger one results in a 19-by-24-foot pond. Notably, both kits incorporate essential components for a constructed wetland.

Given the human interaction involved in recreational ponds, an elevated filtration system is imperative, necessitating



AquaBlox Water Storage Modules create the base of the wetland filtration system for a contemporary recreational pond.



Incorporate multiple interactive areas when designing a recreational pond. A gazebo creates an ideal space to enjoy this water feature by Joey Genovese of Genoscape Inc. in Markham, Ontario, Canada.

a higher water turnover rate of once or twice per hour. Noteworthy is the fact that the wetland filter is designed to be up to 50% of the surface area of the main pond. This strategic integration ensures optimal water quality management, fostering a healthy and thriving environment for recreational pond activities. In addition, you also need to anticipate an area equal to or greater than the pond when considering the wetland filter, berm and planting areas, streams and waterfalls.

Whether opting for a kit or a custom design, it's prudent to contemplate

several factors before embarking on the installation of a recreational pond.

### Excavation and Construction

Once the planning and design stages are complete, it's time to bring the vision to life through excavation and construction.

Before you start digging, do your homework ahead of time and familiarize yourself with the municipality's regulations so there's no hidden surprises once construction begins. You need to know your liabilities when



Recreational ponds are growing in popularity due to their ease of maintenance and year-round beauty. This pond was designed and installed by Chris Siewing of Nature's Recreation in Arnold, Missouri.

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Aquascape conducts hands-on training for a recreational pond and stream during a Pondemonium event.



Use landscaping and rock placement to create a recreational pond that looks natural and mature.

you're digging deeper than 2 feet deep.

Keep in mind that the amount of soil removed for a recreational pond is far greater than your standard 8-by-11-foot pond that's 2 feet deep. This likely involves heavy machinery, so it's crucial to consider how you'll access the property with the necessary equipment. With

There are a lot of logistics to plan and consider when constructing recreational ponds. Make sure you plan for the staging and delivery of products. You'll need approximately 60 to 75 tons of stone, which doesn't include river gravel. Before supplies are delivered, determine where they'll be staged



Large, flat boulders and strategically placed shelves within the pond create easy access for children and adults alike.

a small backyard pond, you can use the excavated soil to create a berm, but with a large pond, you'll need the proper resources to haul away most of the dirt.

Due to increased depth of excavation, you might hit groundwater depending on your geographical location, time of the year and climatic conditions. Rainy periods and storms can temporarily cause excess water in the deeper sections of the excavation. You'll need to evaluate and understand the soil conditions and long-term challenges of this issue. Installing a sub-liner drainage system might be necessary to ensure a successful installation. If this isn't addressed during the construction phase, groundwater may become a long-term functional issue, which becomes more costly to fix when the pond is complete.

and how you'll access and move them during the construction process.

In good weather conditions, a smaller recreational pond can be installed in approximately two weeks with a five-man team. A larger rec pond takes about three weeks or more, depending on the scope of the water feature.

### Landscaping and Aesthetics

Landscaping around the pond helps seamlessly integrate it into the surrounding environment. Use rocks, boulders and native vegetation to create a naturalistic border. Incorporate a variety of plantings to provide habitat for wildlife and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the pond.

Don't forget about lighting options, both underwater and around the pond perimeter, to extend the enjoyment of the recreational oasis into the evening hours.

## Recreational Pond vs. Swimming Pool

Traditional, chemically treated swimming pools are being replaced with water the way nature intended it to be. This means water that's naturally balanced and filtered, providing a healthier, sustainable environment for human interaction.

If you have a customer asking for a swimming pool, it's not always wise to try and talk them into a recreational pond. The pool customer is different from a pond customer and is more interested in swimming in a sterile environment. Your customer might not be aware of recreational ponds, and it's perfectly fine to educate them about a natural option that's better for their health and the environment. But understand that if they really want a pool, they likely won't be happy with a recreational pond.

For more information on recreational ponds and kit options, visit [www.aquascapeinc.com/recreational-ponds](http://www.aquascapeinc.com/recreational-ponds). ☞

### About the Author

**Ed Beaulieu** is vice president of field research and contractor development at Aquascape Inc. Ed holds a B.S. in zoology with an emphasis in limnology and concentrated his master's studies in marine biology. Ed has designed and installed thousands of water features around the world. His work has appeared in numerous trade and consumer publications, including Architectural Digest and Better Homes and Gardens. Ed received a YouTube Silver Playlist button and continues to vlog about water features at [youtube.com/edthepondprofessor](http://youtube.com/edthepondprofessor).





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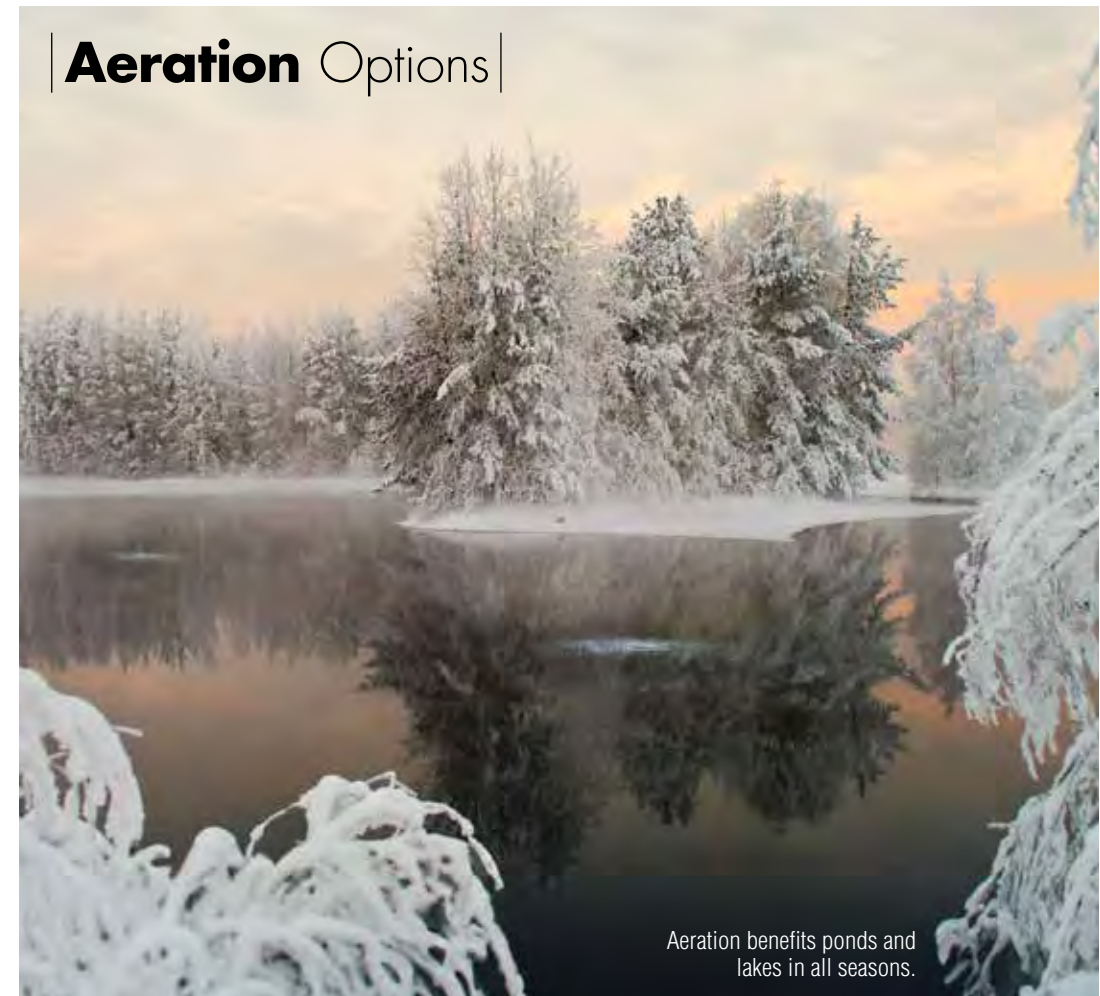
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### Aeration Options



Aeration benefits ponds and lakes in all seasons.

## Alternatives to Electricity

When to choose renewable energy for water aeration

by **Scott Finn,**  
Airmax

All waterbodies, whether small retention ponds or large-acreage ponds and lakes, benefit from increased dissolved oxygen levels provided through aeration. While ponds receive some aeration simply through water movement created by nature, it is not enough to optimize the health of the waterbody for aquatic life and rid the water column of toxic gases that build up over

time. Therefore, pond owners should always consider maximizing aeration through the use of decorative fountains, surface aerators or diffused aeration systems.

Decorative fountains and surface aerators typically aerate 6 to 8 feet deep and provide some aesthetic value. Diffused aeration systems, on the other hand, provide whole-pond aeration through subsurface water movement that begins at the pond floor. Regardless of which type of system a pond owner chooses, a few other factors may determine whether





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Solar fountains are ideal for those seeking an alternative energy solution to power their fountain display or in remote locations with no electricity access.

solar or traditional electric-powered systems provide the best fit.

### The Solar Option

Solar-powered fountains and aerators have become more popular in recent years due to improved photovoltaic (PV) technology as well as their ability to provide aeration for ponds in more remote locations where access to electricity is either limited or nonexistent. Fountain and aeration systems that are solar driven can be installed virtually anywhere, provided the system can receive optimal southern exposure and is free from obstructions such as trees and vegetation growth, privacy fences or buildings.

Given that solar panel mounting equipment can often be installed pond-side, some cost savings can be achieved on power cords for fountains and on

airlines for diffused aeration systems. The savings on these items, however, only equates to a fraction of the cost of solar-powered equipment, which is typically 2 to 2 ½ times the cost of a traditional electric system. Therefore, the average return on investment occurs between years 6 and 8 of run time on a solar unit. Conversely, even if electric power is possible in some remote locations, the costs involved in running power to the desired location can often exceed the overall price of a solar unit.

### Gone With the Wind

Some have turned to the use of windmill aeration when looking to improve pond health, believing it to be a comparable, less expensive option to solar; however, this is not the case. Windmill aeration is wholly inconsistent, given that it is completely dependent on

natural air movement, which can vary by the hour. Wind levels often decrease at night and in the hottest parts of the day, when aeration is most critical.

I have often been disappointed with the performance and results of wind-powered systems. Well-designed solar powered systems provide consistent aeration, even under cloudy conditions, and can run up to 12 hours per day on direct-drive systems, providing supplemental oxygen during the hot summer months while also preventing winter fish kills.

The only downside of a direct-drive system is that as daylight hours decrease in winter months, so do the hours of operation. A premium solar aerator with battery backup can provide aeration for up to 24 hours per day, providing all the same benefits, plus increasing oxygen levels at night and providing more consistent enhancement of bene-



Setting up solar aeration is simple and can help save on electricity and energy costs. Battery backup systems can prolong operation up to 24 hours per day.



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ficial bacteria treatment products. Therefore, when truly concerned about improving the water quality of ponds in more remote areas, solar is the only viable option.

### Limitations of Solar

Despite the flexibility and green energy benefits of solar fountains and aerators, they do have their limitations. Solar fountains and surface aerators, which are also direct-drive units, are unable to run at night during times when aeration is needed most, since aquatic plants only give off additional oxygen during daylight hours through photosynthesis. The same goes for direct-drive solar aeration systems — although this could be resolved with a slightly more expensive battery-backup aeration system.

Nevertheless, pond depth and size are defining characteristics that could potentially eliminate diffused solar aeration systems from the list of options altogether, given that the typical solar unit has a maximum diffuser depth of around 20 feet. Most traditional electric aeration systems are designed to operate at a depth from 2 to 50 feet and allow for aeration

in even the deepest part of a pond, with an average operating cost of approximately \$1.25 - \$1.50 per day.

Larger waterbodies over two acres are also ideal candidates for electric-powered aeration systems since they can often be sufficiently aerated with one system powering anywhere from four to 12 diffusers. Aerating the same pond with solar would require multiple units, increasing the equipment costs to 3 to 4 times that of a single large electric-powered system.

### The Electric Advantage

Systems powered by electricity also have distinct advantages and limitations to consider. Advancements in compressor technology have significantly reduced electricity consumption, making electric-powered aeration systems both energy efficient and cost effective.

Electric aeration systems are the most reliable option for most pond and lake owners. Consistent performance ensures a steady supply of oxygen, improving water circulation and overall water quality. Like solar and wind-powered aerators, elec-



tric diffused aeration systems can be used year-round, regardless of weather conditions; however, they are not dependent on unpredictable factors such as sunlight or wind gusts, resulting in the most consistent aeration throughout all seasons.

Electric aeration systems are known for their ease of installation, as most systems run on standard 115-volt power. This convenience allows for a hassle-free setup, saving time and effort. Systems are available in various sizes to meet the needs of waterbodies large and small, deep or shallow. Electric aeration systems do, of course, require a power source nearby. If pondside power is not available, most electric aeration systems can be placed up to 1,000 feet from the shore using a remote manifold. If you have a remote pond with no access to electric power, alternative energy sources should be considered.

Similar to aeration, if you have a remote pond or prefer alternative energy, solar-powered fountains are a good choice. Electric fountains,

however, offer a wider variety of horsepower options, producing unrivaled displays in height and scale. Fountain choice largely depends on aesthetic goals and available power supply.

For the majority of small-to-medium-sized natural waterbodies, solar-powered fountains and aerators can greatly improve water quality by removing toxic gases, increasing dissolved oxygen levels and enhancing the performance of natural bacteria treatment products, especially when traditional electric power is not available. They also present an alternative for those who simply prefer a green-energy solution to improving pond health. Although a traditional electric-powered fountain or aerator will always provide a wider range of system options, the most consistent performance and the lowest initial investment cost, solar fountains and aerators have secured a place in the pond and lake market through continued improvements in solar technology. *CS*

### About the Author

**Scott Finn** has been the technical training manager at Airmax since 2020. In 2018, he developed the Certified Airmax Service Technician (CAST) program, a service school that allows professional installers from around the country to become certified experts in the installation, maintenance and troubleshooting of Airmax fountains and aeration systems. As a part of the Airmax Product Development team, Scott is directly involved in new product launches through product testing, training and development of technical product information.



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| Beyond the **Pond** |

# Start Your Engines!

Antique car collecting supports work-life balance

by **Benjamin Timmermans**,  
Liquid Landscapes

*Publisher's note - this is a new series that showcases what pond builders like to do in their free time when they're not building ponds.*

Since my childhood in the suburbs of Ohio, I have possessed an unwavering passion for water. As far back as 1984, I remember when I pleasantly surprised my parents by creating a 3-foot-wide pond with my friends in the woods next to their house. We even ventured to the creek to catch fish to populate the pond — albeit unaware of the fact that it was not conducive to supporting life. Unfortunately, the fish perished within a mere two days, but this setback did not deter my enthusiasm for constructing ponds. It is this unyielding drive and determination that has contributed to the success of my company, Liquid Landscapes, in the waterscape industry.

## Finding My Passion(s)

In 2018, I discovered a Christmas list from 1985 in the memories my mom had saved over the years. It was a typical list for a kid from that era, with requests for a Santa Cruz skateboard, an Atari, a soccer ball and a few other period toys. About halfway down the list there were two things







Hanging around the garage and decompressing after work is my Zen time.

that made me smile when I read them. (It actually makes me smile every time I think about it!) There in the bullet-point list were two gems that spoke to my love for all things vintage: a vintage bike and golf cart. Reading this solidified my other passion and lifelong hobby of collecting antiques and cars.

My work ethic and view on business hasn't wavered much over the years. I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge and passion for running a business from my immigrant father. Though indirectly, I also learned that you must have time for other passions. There's a

saying I picked up many years ago that I repeat at least once a week. "I own a business; it doesn't own me." I have always believed in the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and this saying is a constant reminder to prioritize my personal interests and passions outside of running my business. It allows me to stay grounded and maintain a sense of fulfillment and enjoyment in both my professional and personal endeavors. By nurturing my love for cars and antique picking, I am able to recharge and bring a fresh perspective to my work, ultimately benefiting both

myself and my business.

### More Than a Hobby

I find great enjoyment in exploring the world of vintage car hunting and antique collecting during my free time. This hobby has allowed me to travel extensively, both within the country and abroad, and has provided me with the opportunity to connect with remarkable individuals along the way.

In fact, I have even collaborated with fellow pond builders to acquire specific items for my collection. For instance, Dominic Carrone from Social



Having my daughter Brooke be a part of these adventures has been so rewarding.



Ponds assisted me in shipping early MK1 VW wheels from California. These wheels helped me finish a period-correct Kubvan. John Magyar of Universal Aquatics helped me obtain vintage Bosch plugs from Georgia, which helped me complete a vintage Bosch cabinet display. Additionally, Lloyd Lightsey from The Pond Monster went above and beyond by towing a 1975 Sears Clamshell trailer to his location for me to pick up. This vintage trailer would accompany my 1975 camper. Having a network of contacts across the country within the pond building community has been invaluable, as I continuously receive valuable tips and leads to further enhance my hobby.

### A Trunkful of Memories

I have had the opportunity to participate in several memorable hunts and trips over the years, one of which was particularly life changing. I had been hunting for six months when I discovered a 1975 VW Riviera camper in Washington state and purchased it sight unseen. I flew to Washington with my daughter, Brooke, with the intention of driving it back. Although I had allowed three days for the journey, it ultimately took us five days to traverse the 2,700 miles. This adventure was truly unforgettable, and the memories I made will stay with both of us forever.

This past year, I stumbled across a very low-mile 1997 OBS Ford F250 located in Colorado. While attending the Water Garden Expo in Oklahoma, I decided to change my flight to Denver to inspect the vehicle and ultimately purchased it. Despite minor diesel issues, I drove the truck for 21 hours back home. When my daughter was 8, we flew out to obtain the VW camper, and when she turned 15, the Ford OBS truck was a surprise birthday gift. After fixing some minor engine issues and upgrading the truck with a lift and bigger tires, I kept it hidden from my daughter for over a month. We surprised her at a truck show when we threw her the keys. She cried, and so did I.

One of the more notable trips I had was when I received a call from an individual in Brooklyn, New York, who had heard about my collection of vintage VW signs. They had unsuccessfully attempted to get Mike Wolfe from American Pickers to come out and look at an 8-foot VW lighted sign on their building. I decided to take them up on the offer and made the journey in my work truck the following day, stopping in New Jersey overnight to meet for drinks with Mike



My collecting and picking has taken me from coast to coast and across both U.S. borders. Chasing down my 1985 Rabbit GTI (top) took me up to Canada. I really enjoy exploring Mom-and-Pop stops and small towns along the way. Getting into the big city of Brooklyn to get this 1960s 8-foot VW sign (middle) was also an adventure. A big part of the journey is getting the items (bottom) safely back to the shop.





### Leave the Driving to Us...

In 2021, I had the opportunity to acquire a 1948 GM Silversides bus without an engine from Massachusetts. To restore this vintage beauty, I embarked on a journey to locate the original engine, reaching out to various diesel shops in the tri-state area. Eventually, I found the engine in New Hampshire and, with the help of my friend Gene, spent 18 months meticulously restoring and installing it. In addition to the engine, we also refurbished the wheels, air brakes, and electrical system. Our first adventure with the restored bus will be a road trip to Maine!



Hall of Waterline Designs. The next day, I found myself driving into the closed-down VW dealership building in Brooklyn and discovering the 1960s 8-foot VW sign on the second level. After negotiating a price of \$800, the seller generously allowed me to grab anything else in the building. Let's just say I barely had room to sit in the truck when I left! The pick turned out to be incredibly profitable and remains one of the most successful picks I have had to date.

It wasn't even a year later that I got word of another sign up in New Jersey. Mike Hall loaded that one on his truck and drove it down to North Carolina to me. Pond builders are the best!

In 2020, I found the year and make of the first car I ever owned coming out of high school. I bought this 1985 VW Rabbit GTI sight unseen as well. However, there were a few challenges to overcome. The car was in Canada, and due to the closed border, I was unable to fly in and attempt to drive it back myself. After waiting for three months for the border to reopen, it became apparent that it would not be happening anytime soon. The seller was eager to have the car gone, so I made the decision to drive to the Sweetgrass border crossing in Montana with a trailer. I contracted a commercial hauler to drive the car across the border, and off I went. This was a 68-hour

round trip that I completed in less than four days. This experience holds a special place in my heart, as it brings back wild memories of my early years of driving.

### Enjoying the Process

The hunt for cars and antiques is indeed an adventure filled with excitement and unknowns. The process of searching for and acquiring these items adds to the thrill of the hobby. However, the journey doesn't end with the acquisition. The process of wrenching and repairing these vehicles and antiques is another enjoyable aspect of the hobby. It's fulfilling to take something in need of repair and restore it to a better condition. Having a dedicated space like a shop, where I can work on these projects at any time, is a great way to decompress and indulge in my hobby.

With multiple projects in various stages, there's always something to work on and improve. Although some projects in the hobby of car and antique hunting may seem never-ending, this is a common experience that adds to the ongoing enjoyment and challenge. I was able to locate and acquire the vintage bike and golf cart, allowing me to fulfill the childhood dream captured on that list. It is immensely satisfying to see these vintage treasures brought back to life and to have



I believe in using the cars as much as possible. There are no garage queens at my place.

them as a part of my collection.

Engaging in a hobby has proven to be instrumental in maintaining a healthy work-life balance for me. The time dedicated to my hobby provides a much-needed break from the demands and pressures of running a business, reducing stress and fatigue. Additionally, my hobby has allowed me to acquire new skills and knowledge, which has translated into increased confidence in various aspects of

my professional life. The sense of accomplishment I derive from pursuing my hobby is distinct from the satisfaction I experience in my work within the waterscape construction industry. It serves as a sort of mental and emotional vacation, rejuvenating me both mentally and physically. Overall, I firmly believe that hobbies contribute to a more fulfilling and enjoyable life. (P.S. If you know any picking honey holes, call me!) ☞

### About the Author

**Benjamin Timmermans**, president and lead designer of Liquid Landscapes Inc., is a national leader in the waterscape industry with a passion for creating aquatic environments that captivate and extend the senses. His degrees in recreation and wildlife management led him to a passion for aquatic ecology as well as a fascination with the balance of natural ecosystems. Benjamin launched Liquid Landscapes in 2000. He has completed hundreds of projects in over 10 states from the Pacific to the Atlantic coast. Benjamin holds certifications with the top industry manufacturers in the waterscape industry. He has authored several published pieces and currently serves on the editorial committee for POND Trade magazine. His passion for creating breathtaking waterscapes and the unification of the waterscape industry led to him being awarded the "Pond Contractor of the Year" in 2015. [www.LiquidLandscapesInc.com](http://www.LiquidLandscapesInc.com)



Making fun displays in the shop and around the house with all my finds can be as creative as building a waterscape.

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MORE INFO

| Conference Recap |

## 'Sailing Toward Success'

Recap of the 2023 Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference

by Demi Fortuna,  
Atlantic-Oase

The seventh annual Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference began Oct. 25, 2023, with check-in at the well-appointed hospitality room at the hotel, multiple tours of the factory and offices, and a welcome reception across the compound on the patio at the Blue Canyon restaurant. The warm, low-key get-together, a perfect introduction to the conference, was for many the first chance to put faces to the names and voices they interact with all year. The 80 or so attendees mingled and chatted with new and old friends and staff in the sunken garden below the restaurant.

After introductions by Jeff Weemhoff, President of Atlantic-Oase, and Thorsten Muck, CEO of The Oase Group, the group headed up the stone steps to the restaurant for a four-star buffet and liberal libation. For most, the evening ended in lively discussions and storytelling in the hospitality room next door — probably later than advisable!

### Classes Begin

The next day dawned with breakfast in front of the conference rooms at 6:30 a.m., with the keynote presentation by renowned entrepreneur and author Marty Grunder at 8 a.m. As president and CEO of the Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping, Marty entertained attendees with a funny, enlightening and wise look into his journey from very young businessman through years of building his business to finally helping his employees to grow and succeed. After the very well-received address, Marty contin-







**Presidential Award**  
Randy Stewart



**Contractor of the Year**  
Joel Hilles



**Monster Award**  
Anne and Josiah Crusore



ued with leading Numbers You Should Be Watching, which was held alongside Advanced Techniques in Water Gardening with Demi Fortuna and Jim Chubb so that all could attend.

The next group of classes included Kelly Billing's brilliant Planting for Success – The Benefits of Plants, which outlined how plants don't just beautify; they purify water under the most demanding conditions and deliver results impossible to achieve by other means. Sean Bell presented Diving into the Clear Water Pond System, a seminar on how to guarantee clear water in the backyard pond on a much grander scale. Thorsten, Jeff and Frayne McAtee introduced ground-

breaking new lake management technology in Expand Your Market with Lake Therapy, a real eye-opener into the world of large-scale water management with powerful tools that deliver previously unheard-of results in real-world scenarios.

Waves of Innovations presented the latest Atlantic-Oase products and accessories designed to deliver better results with less effort, and in many cases at lower cost. Small business CPA Bruce Downie turned his attention to the dollars-and-cents information business owners need to make decisions about taxes, purchasing, software and applications in Navigating the Deep Waters of Business Accounting and



Taxes. B.J. Linger offered timely, valuable advice (and some amazing Texas Twinkies – thank you, B.J.!) in Propel Your Business Forward, an exposé of the changes to the Google Business Profile and discussion of the importance of growing digital business profiles in a changing virtual environment.

### Award Presentations

At the end of the sessions, all gathered for the highlight of the conference – the naming of the award winners. Anne and Josiah Crusore were recognized by the Monster Award, given each year by Lloyd “Monster” Lightsey in recognition of the terrible impact of

cancer and the positive impact of water features on those afflicted. Joel Hilles was named Atlantic-Oase Contractor of the Year for his many years of good work and the close ties he has developed with many on staff in his constant quest to grow in his craft and artistry.

Finally, the President's Award, given to those who have had a tremendous positive influence on the water-gardening industry, was presented to Randy Stewart of Unit Liner. Randy, a unifying force in water gardening, invited all to attend his Water Garden Expo every year in Shawnee, Oklahoma – even erstwhile competitors! Randy and his family are also

exemplary foster parents, leaving an indelible loving mark on the lives of more than 80 children.

After applause and more than a few teary eyes, attendees headed off on buses to Cleveland's Music Box Supper Club, where a lively evening of local food, live music by the amazing Sunshine Jones Band and dancing – lots of dancing – awaited. Even after returning, attendees kept the hospitality room hopping until the wee hours.

Friday morning breakfast was the occasion for heartfelt farewells and plans to meet up again, perhaps at next year's Atlantic-Oase Professional Conference! ☺







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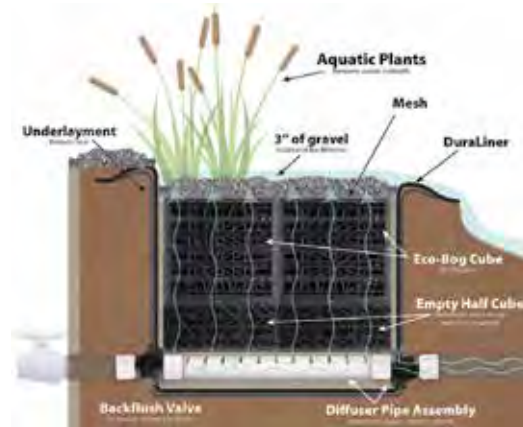
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| **Cover** Story |

# Sourcing the Perfect **Rock**

Provide your clients with natural works of art

**by Dave Duensing,**

Aquatic Construction Services

**S**o, you might've thought this article was going to be about rocks. You're wrong — but then again, you're right! If you are a water feature builder or designer, rock is probably one of the largest material and labor investments of your projects. If this is the case, then we need to look at options to elevate the impact rock can have on your projects and your bottom line. In this article, we're going to look at presenting this high-cost project material as a valuable, desirable, natural work of art to your clients.



Shapes created by nature can be quite whimsical and, in the right setting, a perfect accent

## **Rock-et Science**

A successful rock installation is not judged by the volume or size of the rocks installed; instead, value is derived from elements like focal points — thoughtfully set and positioned specimen, character or feature rocks that draw the human eye into specific portions of the garden or water feature.

Rocks can also make up the critical visual structure that properly anchors your feature into the overall landscape. Always try to maintain visual balance with the distribution and strategic placement of specific rocks to make the feature feel comfortable, as opposed to confused or overburdened.





Tall and dramatic rocks (left) can form a transition from one area of a garden to another. Considerable time, effort (right) and the right equipment are used to carefully extract, load and deliver pristine rocks to customers and projects.

As Shaun Lindley's emphasized in his informative article "A Stone's Throw" (September/October 2022 issue), it's very important to ensure quality rock is harvested, carefully secured onto trucks and delivered to your site. Most water feature or hardscape builders I've spoken or worked with don't really have time to visit several distant stone yards for every project, so they call their "salesperson" and place an order. The reality is that often this salesperson has

never installed a rock or boulder into a landscape, nor have they experienced what an excellent rock installation looks like. Your rock salesperson's next action is likely to hand an order ticket to a forklift driver who then pulls enough rock to fill your order. The bottom line in this scenario is that until the rock is delivered, you don't really know what you are getting.

Thus, the concept of personalized, experienced and professional rock

harvesting is widely attractive, as it would eliminate or reduce competition by raising the quality and ultimately the perceived and actual value of your projects. It would allow you to be more effective with your rock ordering, installation time and labor costs, and less typical with your projects so your clients will realize the added value of your artistry and enable you to build more profit into your one-of-a-kind projects.



Once loaded (left), each rock is carefully protected and secured for transport. This fountain (right) is a single rock that flows and cascades in several directions and was formed in a shallow sea bed.

### A Growing Scope

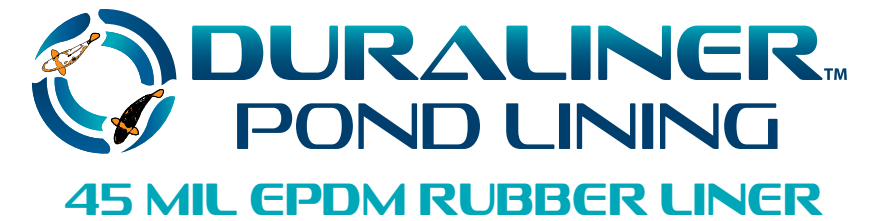
Stepping back in time to 1989 when I started my original masonry construction company, I would travel to the local stone yards within a four-hour drive from my home in Northern Illinois to view the inventory. This was the only way I could be assured of the quality, character and size of rocks I would have at my disposal.

As the years went by, my projects began to spread throughout North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. These clients tended to request water and rock features that made a substantial personal statement. This required me to start sourcing rock from multiple locations. I found myself spending a considerable amount of time developing sources of rock that were unique in shape, size and character, and building relationships with landowners and companies that could help me harvest rock.

Fast forward 34 years, and I now find myself spending a higher percentage of my time consulting with homeowners, landowners and landscape professionals like yourself about rock options and sources for their projects.

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It is quite amazing the shapes, sizes and character of rock that can be discovered in various environments. Dave Duensing, as a rock sourcing professional, can provide your company and clients beautiful specimen rocks and can assist with the installation.

### Leave it to the Experts

If your goal is to design and build one-of-a-kind hardscapes and water features, you are going to have to find a way to differentiate yourself, your materials, and your work from hundreds of other pond and hardscape builders. You might consider hiring an independent, experienced, professional company to source rocks with specific character, type, shape or size for your specific project.

Perhaps you need one or more truly unique rocks — a specimen or two as a focal point in the landscape or water feature — and you don't know your options or have access to them locally. Or maybe your clients and projects are taking you further away from your home base and you need a dependable local quality rock source. Don't underestimate the value of minimizing wasted time and effort by working with a professional rock source that provides a higher percentage of quality rock and is more precise with the overall order.

The defining moment that makes this professional service and effort all worthwhile comes when you experience the overwhelming positive comments

and emotional reaction of your client, their friends and other professionals. You personally will also be able to enjoy your own moment of accomplishment and gratification — the WOW factor, as I like to refer to it — from the realiza-

### The concept of personalized, experienced and professional rock harvesting is widely attractive, as it would eliminate or reduce competition by raising the quality and ultimately the perceived and actual value of your projects.

tion that you have pulled together and executed a truly one-of-a kind, remarkable feature.

### Ways to Get Started

The first and most important step to make this opportunity work for you is to not be shy or delinquent about discussing rock options early in meet-

ings. Present the concept of “specimen rocks” and how using a few in the project will enhance the overall project, creating long term visual interest and enjoyment for your client.

For example, in 2005, I was preparing for my largest commercial water feature interview to date. In the PowerPoint presentation I was developing, I included three types of rocks options titled “Good,” “Better” and “Best.” I started off with the “Good” rock first and progressed my way through the “Best” option, openly discussing the rock and trucking costs for each option. As we progressed to the end of the presentation, the client clearly recognized the differences and benefits of the options and committed to an initial order for 1,000 tons of the “Best” rock option. Always offer your client options, and at least one of those options should push the limits of what you think is possible with the design (and perhaps the budget).

In a different scenario, it could be the extreme shape, uniqueness and usefulness of the rock that is driving the design, so you need to emphasize that some rocks are truly works of art,

formed and literally sculpted entirely by nature. It could be limestone or sandstone rocks that were formed horizontally, but when the opportunity allows, can be successfully installed vertically in water gardens, landscape gardens and alongside pathways, performing like statues or interesting garden walls that can be planted or have water cascading down its face.

Other rocks may have been shaped or modified by glaciers that slid across their top surfaces. These rocks often have an unusually flat and smooth top surface similar to a kitchen countertop and can be used for tables, walks or patios. Other rocks may have been formed perfectly suitable for a fountain with deep, rounded basins, having originated as part of a shallow sea floor. In these instances, the sea floor was a perfect environment for the roots of palm trees and mangroves to gouge and pierce the soft material, and now only the hardened, dynamically shaped rock remains.

Some of the most remarkable and dynamic larger fountain rocks, once drilled, plumbed and delivered, will sell for \$35,000 to \$70,000 apiece but are ultimately priced by size and character. Since these various types of fountain and landscape rocks come in all sizes,



Sometimes it is the size of the rock that matters. This one rock, once installed, will be the entire patio.

the price per unit can vary extremely from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars, and it is not uncommon to have three to four of these specimen rocks being sold as a collection.

### A Rock Nerd's Offer

We all know people who are intrinsically (and possibly genetically) drawn to and fascinated by that one thing that excites them — be it cars, sports, water,

art, wine or food, it sparks passion in their lives, and they naturally collect all the trivia and knowledge they can and file it away.

Intrinsically, I am drawn to rocks — a rock nerd, some say, and I know several others who share this passion. I seek out the unique. I research how it was formed and shaped, what its substance is, what causes the striations and colorings... Is it hard, soft, malleable, workable? Will it





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hold up to water running over it continuously or in freezing climates? Will lichen and mosses grow on it?

If you are a creative and passionate water feature contractor and have the skills and experience to execute your vision, your business focus is likely to design and construct substantially built, aesthetically pleasing rock and water features. To be able to advance this passion and grow your company, you want your clients to clearly recognize that you bring a unique, personalized and valuable service to the table by presenting them with a combination of experience, design and materials that they might find intriguing and exuding confidence in your ability to execute. Your goal is to elicit desire and excitement in the client and move them to want — or, better yet — believe they need what you have to offer.

Having the opportunity to professionally seek out and source unique rock nationally and internationally for several decades has opened my eyes to the potential opportunities I can offer to other professionals. This unique service enables you, a professional water feature or hardscape designer and builder, an opportunity to significantly elevate your projects and your profits by adding a few choice, well placed, dynamic rock elements into your features, which may help you transform your projects to the next level of artistry. This added element or specimen rock detail could be one of

the most important single factors that will add value and distinction exponentially to your projects and company. ☞

### About the Author



**David B. Duensing**, a longtime waterscape and hardscape designer and builder, has an extreme passion for natural rock. Over the last few decades, he has developed sources for some magnificent examples of rock, which often come

with a story. Having spent nearly as much time in search of perfect rocks as he has in constructing and placing those rocks, Dave's resources for natural rock are as broad and multifaceted as they are interesting, and a valuable asset to gardens and landscapes.

After the creation of David B. Duensing & Associates Inc in 1989, Duensing focused his efforts on learning and perfecting the design and construction techniques required to perform at the top of the industry. In 2006, he formed Aquatic Construction Services (ACS) which specializes in the construction aspect of natural rock formations and living water features. In 2019, Dave created a division within ACS that assists other professional and landowners in sourcing the very best natural rock possible for specific projects and clients.

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Brian Fitzsimmons examines some beautiful Chagoi and Yamabuke at Marudo Koi Farm.

| Language of **Koi** |

# The **UPSELL** Factor

Partner with dealers to  
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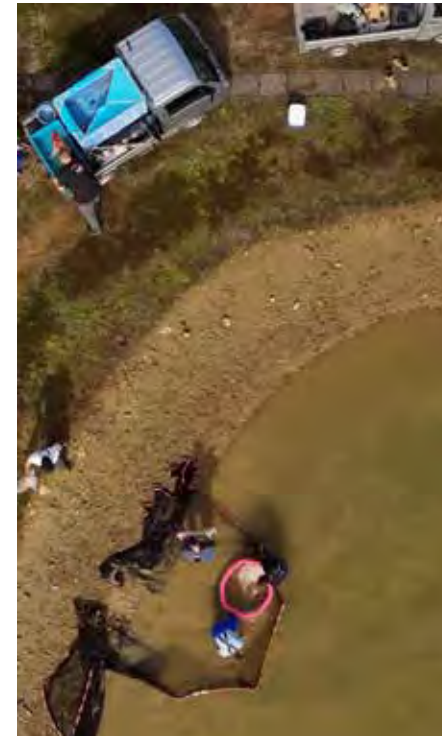
by **Brian Fitzsimmons,**  
Fitz's Fish Ponds

**D**ue to the meticulous nature of koi keeping in Japan, it is imperative to generate strong relationships with the breeders, as they provide access to the highest-quality koi. In order to add Japanese imported koi sales as an element of your retail or pond contracting business, one of the first logistical steps would be to create a partnership with a koi dealer. While it is possible to import koi directly from Japan, working with a reputable koi dealer can offer several advantages that can help guarantee the best possible koi.

Part TWO of TWO

## Benefits of Using Koi Dealers

By working with a koi dealer, you will be able to gain access to top breeders, as a good dealer should have established relationships with top koi breeders in Japan and can help you find the best quality koi available. In addition, a good koi dealer will carefully inspect the koi before purchase to ensure they are healthy and of the highest quality, while educating you along the way. This can help you avoid buying inferior fish that may not meet your customer's expectations.



A group from Koi Trips USA participates in a mud pond harvest at Shintaro Koi Farm using a drag net to safely contain and harvest the koi from the mud pond.

In addition, a koi dealer can assist and provide you with all the shipping and logistics information. Importing koi from Japan can be a complex and expensive process, and a dealer can help you navigate the logistics of transportation and customs to ensure your fish arrive safely and on time. A reputable koi dealer can also provide you with expert advice on all aspects of koi care, including water quality, feeding and maintenance. This can be especially helpful if you are new to including koi sales as part of your business.

## Choosing a Dealer

Before creating a partnership, it is important to do your research. Consider looking for a dealer with a strong reputation in the koi community. You can ask for recommendations from other koi enthusiasts or search online for reviews and testimonials.

In this search, it is important to choose a dealer who has many years of experience in the koi industry. Building relationships with

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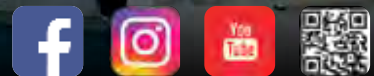
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Fitzsimmons admires the beautiful Hi Utsuri at Shinoda Koi Farm and debates which to bring back to the U.S. for his customers.

the breeders takes time, so it is important to select a dealer who frequently visits Japan and maintains great relationships with the breeders. Oftentimes, different breeders specialize in different varieties of koi; therefore, it is important to look for a dealer who offers you access to a wide variety of koi types and colors so you can find the perfect fish to match your preferences.

You will want to select a koi dealer that

**You will want to select a koi dealer that imports koi for their own business needs as well. This way, the dealer will ensure the koi are healthy, well fed and well cared for.**

imports koi for their own business needs as well. This way, the dealer will ensure the koi are healthy, well fed and well cared for. A reputable dealer should also be happy to show you their facilities and answer any questions you may have. Finally, be sure to choose a dealer who is friendly, knowledgeable and willing to help you find the right koi for your needs.

### SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

**Cooper Sallade, Fin & Feather in Richmond, Virginia** Fin and Feather originated as a pet store in 1952 and about 25 years ago, customers started requesting high amounts of fish — mainly goldfish and koi. At this time, Cooper Sallade and his partner Shane felt compelled to open a garden center as well to expand their business and house the fish they were bringing in. To their benefit, both stores are located in the same strip mall, with the garden center expanding to a 1,500- sq.-ft. building with a backyard that includes 10,000 gallons of water to house their stock of goldfish and koi.



Sallade and his partner were having a difficult time finding quality koi to sell their customers due to supply chain issues. In their search for a new supplier, they found Fitz's Fish Ponds and formed a great relationship. They quickly stocked their tanks and began to see their customers go wild for the Japanese imported koi! At first they were stocked with mostly Tosai, but after much demand, Fin & Feather expanded to stocking larger koi as well.

In the fall of 2022, Cooper and his wife went on their first koi trip to Japan with Fitz and his team. Cooper recalls, "I couldn't believe how financially beneficial the trip was on top of being an absolute unworldly experience. While we were in Japan, we sourced 50% of the koi for the stock in our stores and we got some beautiful large ones — about 12-20 inches. The rest, I bought personally and actually left in Japan to go back into the mud ponds to grow out." Cooper expressed that he can't wait to go back to Japan and to also see how his fish have grown.

He shared that one area of business where koi sales have actually had the most impact is within their pond construction division. As a contractor, he has been able to enhance his knowledge about koi and their needs as they grow. As some of his customers have become koi hobbyists, he has seen a gateway into turning what were once considered "one and done" customers into lifelong customers. "Ever since we introduced Japanese koi to our customers, it has changed the way we look at our customer base," he continued, "We are finding ourselves helping customers enlarge their ponds or reconstruct ponds we originally built, as they have grown in the koi hobby and need to expand to house more koi or larger koi."

Cooper has also noticed that the types of ponds he is starting to build for koi hobbyists are different. Whereas he might have otherwise started with a more natural water garden, some customers are wanting to keep their koi in more formal dedicated koi ponds with bottom drains, glass viewing windows and quarantine tanks, as they do in Europe and Japan.

"Adding koi sales to our business framework has been a true game changer and a renewed source of revenue," Cooper said. "I used to think that a pond build was going to be our biggest sale. Now I view it as a gateway to introduce customers to koi and, in turn, make them a customer for life."





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Masaru Saito (above) of Shintaro Koi Farm harvests a stunning kohaku from a mud pond. Hisashi Hirasawa (right) of Marudo koi farm transports a koi from the harvest into the indoor koi house for the winter.

### Koi Trips

A great koi dealer should invite you to Japan with them to see how the koi-buying process works. They should also assist you in hand-selecting koi for your customers. At Fitz's Fish Ponds, we want our customers to join us on these koi-buying trips; however, if they cannot come, we have many ways to stay in contact with them while the team visits the breeders. We provide live video and photo updates for our customers so we

can try and source exactly the right koi for them.

Throughout the course of a year at Fitz's Fish Ponds, we run three trips to Japan, each with a different focus. These include the All Japan Koi Show (Jan/Feb), a spring buy trip (April/May) and finally, the most popular trip, the Fall Harvest (Oct/Nov). At the end of each trip, we work with the team at Shintaro Koi Farm to handle the shipping and logistics of getting all of the koi back to our farm facility in Milford,



**A great koi dealer should invite you to Japan with them to see how the koi-buying process works.**

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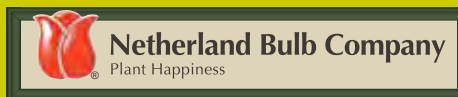
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Saito and Fitzsimmons partner in the No. 1 Shintaro Koi Harvest and check out the growth of the koi.

New Jersey.

We are able to support a strict quarantine process and house all the koi bought for our own business as well as for our customers. We then distribute and deliver to customers when the koi have acclimated and destressed from their travels.

After doing the Japan trips and importing koi for years now, we have it down to a science. We want to share this experience with any pond contractor who is interested and looking to add koi sales to their business. With their rich history, stunning colors and calming presence, Japanese koi are an investment that pond owners will enjoy for many years to come — and you can help facilitate it all! 🐡

### About the Author

**Brian Fitzsimmons** founder of Fitz's Fish Ponds, ignited his passion for ponds at 13, evolving it into a thriving enterprise since 2008. With three retail locations in NJ and one in PA, his company offers a comprehensive range of services—pond



design, construction, maintenance, hardscaping, and landscaping. Brian envisions his company as the ultimate resource for complete backyard transformations. His commitment to koi enthusiasts is reflected in a unique koi selection experience at their NJ farm, mirroring Japanese traditions. Brian and the FFP team regularly journey to Japan, ensuring the highest quality koi for customer ponds. Recognized with awards, including two INC 5000 titles and Water Artisan of the Year.

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## The Mile High Profit Summit

Business training & more for pond people

by **Paul Holdeman**,  
The Pond Gnome

**B**uilding ponds is a very satisfying trade, which is why we have all chosen to be here. The moment that we turn on a new waterfall and our clients' eyes tear up with joy is the most fulfilling moment I have ever experienced in any trade.

Managing my pond business, though, is a constant battle with innumerable challenges. This is why we chose to attend the Mile High Profit Summit (MHPS) in Denver, Colorado, for the third

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consecutive year. MHPS is put on by a group of business coaches that call themselves The Contractor Fight, and I can assure you that this is no ordinary seminar series!

Why MHPS?

“So, The Pond Gnome has been building and maintaining ponds for almost 25 years, and you guys are selling and delivering over a million dollars’ worth of pond services every year. Why bother with a business training seminar?”

I’m glad you asked! If we believe in the mantra “Customers Served Right!” this requires not just a well-built pond and well-trained service techs, but it also warrants a strong business that will be around to take care of

our clients for the life of their ponds. Keeping up with the best possible business practices is a sure way to be around for the long haul so our clients can count on us.

Too many contracting businesses fail every year for a plethora of reasons. Therefore, a great training program will include much more than how to manage your bookkeeping and resources. MHPS brought in expert speakers from all walks of life to discuss an incredible list of topics, including money management, personal performance, recruiting and retaining great team members, selling techniques, knowing your numbers, business mindset, common bookkeeping mistakes, effective marketing, legal issues (how not to get screwed),

techniques for effective estimating, how to hire a great gatekeeper, understanding and selling to people “not like you,” and working with property managers. They also had a former Air Force Thunderbird pilot who spoke on taking risks and a health expert who spoke hilariously on taking better care of our “meat machine” that mobilizes the three-pound sponge that contains our consciousness.

Network & Connect

As we networked between sessions, I connected with a general contractor, a remodeler, a plumber, an electrician and a fellow pond contractor, all from my beloved state of Arizona!

Several familiar pond contractors attended MHPS, as well as general





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**Joann Harju**  
Atlantis Water Gardens

"We have been using Pondtent for 4+ years to do all our weekly pond tips, blogs as well as post content on our social media pages and we couldn't be happier! Laura is a marketing genius and so easy to work with!"

**Dave Misterly**  
AquaLife Ponds

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contractors, painting contractors, home remodelers, landscapers, plumbers and electricians. You name the trade — all came together in one place to learn to not only get better at the business end of their respective trades, but also to thrive and create an enjoyable, balanced life.

The primary focus of this business group is learning to sell with compassion and empathy and to truly connect with people, which is an important part of the design process. Listening, asking questions (versus dumping information) and avoiding time wasters and tire kickers is a huge part of their process. As my wife Barbi says, this is learning to "weed out the crap." I think we can all agree that nothing is more valuable to us contractors than our time!

There are many educational opportunities out there for learning to be more effective business owners and managers. I hope everyone reading this takes advantage of a couple of them so that you can learn to build, manage and grow a stronger business model to ensure you will stick around for the clients you are bringing into the hobby every day.



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**W. Lim Corporation Announces the All-American Koi Show in Las Vegas**

A spectacular weekend of color, culture and community is in the works and scheduled for March 23-24, 2024 at the at the Silverton Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. W. Lim Corporation, a leader in aquarium, koi pond and natural pool filtration systems,

proudly presents the inaugural All-American Koi Show (AAKS). AAKS will feature a stunning display of world-class koi from Japan, providing a unique platform for koi dealers from around the country to present their finest stock. Attendees can enter their koi into competition. The competition will be directed by Shawn McHenry of Mystic Koi. The koi will be judged by members of the Shinkokai, a Japan-based international organization of koi professionals.

The event will also feature expert-led educational seminars focused on koi breeding and responsible care. AAKS believes that quality judging and a safe environment are the two most important parts of putting on a world class koi show. As the health of the koi in competition is paramount, the show will feature an at-home benching process to minimize risk of spreading disease to other tanks, as well as prevent unneeded stress and potential injury. A Vendor Expo will offer premium Japanese koi, supplies, koi art and more. Families are encouraged to join the festivities, making it a weekend of fun and education for all. To become a vendor at AAKS, visit our event website [www.allamericankoishow.com](http://www.allamericankoishow.com)



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Learn more about the new fountain covers and other pond products at [www.aquascapeinc.com](http://www.aquascapeinc.com).



**Make Plans to Attend the 2024 Water Garden Expo**

Pondliner Wholesale's Water Garden Expo is scheduled Feb. 28-29 and March 1, 2024, at the Grand Casino, Hotel and Resort in Shawnee, Oklahoma. The WGE brings together the largest number industry manufacturers exhibiting in one event with 25 educational seminars and unmatched networking opportunities.

Wednesday afternoon features Larry Carnes leading a two-part seminar on recreational ponds, along with Stacy Pruitt with GSN Partners teaching a two-part Elevate EPDM training session. A happy hour will follow with a chance to network and visit manufacturers' booths.

The presentation of POND Trade's 2023 Artisans of the Year will kick off Thursday morning. Kevin Dougherty headlines the WGE with four seminars on Thursday that will be beneficial for all business owners. Topics include Advanced Estimating, Project Communication, Making the Number Work (Financial Seminar) and Developing Frontline Leadership.

Greg Gant with PerformancePro Pumps, Frayne McAtee with Atlantic-Oase and Shaun Lindley with Lindley Stone are among those scheduled to lead other seminars on Thursday. A happy hour concludes the scheduled events, followed by an evening of networking.

Industry favorite Kelly Billing will be presenting two sessions on Friday. (There are two types of people in the water feature industry: those who love aquatic plants and those who have never heard Kelly speak.) Other seminars include Gravel Bed Filtration by Jason Steele, Internet Marketing by BJ Linger with Outdoor Network Services, and Pond Maintenance Programs by Laura Reale with PondTent. A contractor roundtable featuring four widely respected water feature builders ends the educational program.

For those looking for a hands-on build, Bedrock Nursery will be hosting the Water Garden Expo Memorial Build in Lawton, Oklahoma, on Feb. 26-27, 2024. For more information on this opportunity, join the Facebook group "2024 Water Garden Expo Memorial Build" or contact Bedrock Nursery at 580/248-6337.

The Water Garden Expo is open to trade professionals only. Visit [www.WGExpo.com](http://www.WGExpo.com) or call 866/219-3561 to register or for more information.



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**Save the date for the 2024 UK IWGS Symposium**

The 2024 IWGS Symposium will take place July 16-20 and will be based in the town of Reading, England, which is about 35 miles west of London. The symposium will include visits to the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and RHS Wisley gardens, and a trip to Bennetts Water Gardens in Dorset. There will be an education day on Friday, July 19. We are still investigating possibilities for pre and post-symposium days, so watch [www.iwgs.org/symposium/](http://www.iwgs.org/symposium/) for updated information. The registration form will be released in late January 2024, but please block the dates in your calendar now.





**Fitz's Fish Ponds Concludes 2023 Harvest Trip to Japan**

The Fitz's Fish Ponds team says farewell to Japan as they recently concluded their fourth Fall Harvest Trip to the Yamakoshi Mountains in Niigata, Japan. During their time there, the team managed to secure around 250 boxes of koi both for our own stock as well as for our customers. Last year, the team was only able to bring a few customer groups due to Japan only just recently opening for visitors in mid-October. This year, however, was a completely different story. The FFP & Koi Trips team had over 30 people join in on the trip from various places across the world. They made around 10 trips back and forth to Tokyo to ensure everyone had the best experience possible.



The team and the customers that came along participated in 15 mud pond harvests with Shintaro Koi Farm, and it was an incredible experience. The team also got to partake in a very special Tamasaba Goldfish harvest with Yamasan. In addition, YouTuber Jamie from Aquarium Info joined the team for a portion of the trip. Throughout the course of the trip the following breeders were visited: Kano Koi Farm, Shinoda Koi Farm, Marusei Koi Farm, Maruhiro Koi Farm, Yagenji Koi Farm, Kawakami Koi Farm, Shintaro Koi Farm, Maruhide Koi Farm, Chogoro Koi Farm, Hiroi Koi Farm, Yamasan Koi Farm, Miyatora Koi Farm, Kaneko Koi Farm, Oya Koi Farm, Marudo Koi Farm, Wada Koi Farm, Koda Koi Farm, Otsuka Koi Farm, Aoki Koi Farm, Marusaka Koi Farm, Ikarashi Koi Farm, Sekiguchi Koi Farm, and more.

Outside of the koi farms and koi houses the team and group were able to explore and experience Japanese culture. They attended two Koi Shows in Nagaoka and one of FFP's customers won Best in Size at the show. This is always something to be extremely proud of. Congratulations!

They also visited various koi gardens as well as beautiful antiquated temples and shrines. In addition they went to a bull fight and toured museums. As always, Ryan provided the ultimate nightlife experience for the customers who joined in.

Fitz gives a massive shoutout to Tim Waddington of Quality Nishikigoi, AJ Mandell and Ryan Cardillo, the Koi Trips team.

Stay tuned for more news about this koi shipment. Interested in checking out what we are bringing back? Interested in joining us on our Koi Trip? Call AJ at 908/301-4722.

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