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8  **Rainwater Harvesting - Ancient Practice**
   **Now add it to your business.**
   Demi Fortuna, Atlantic Water Gardens

Rainwater collection dates back 5,000 years. New technologies and equipment are making rainwater harvesting (RH) possible and in some places necessary. Did you know an "Eco-Blox" can support 14,000 lbs. Products like this have made underground storage possible. How much water can be collected from one rooftop? Find the answer to this and many other important points. Maybe even add a Pond-free water feature to go with that RH system.

12  **Language of Koi - Tategoi: The Truth About Unfinished Fish**
    Matt Corino, Sugar Loaf Koi Farm

Tategoi means "unfinished future koi." A true tategoi can take years to finish. When your customer is looking for a tategoi, be sure to be able to answer them correctly. Matt owns a koi farm and has made numerous trips to Japan; learn from his years of experience.

16  **The Use of Aquatic Plants for Algae Control in Domestic Ponds**
    David Curtright, pondplants.com

Yes aquatic plants can help with algae control. Learn how from long time industry expert. Aquatic plants can be divided into four associated groups, learn what they are and what they do. David makes suggestions on how to build a pond to include aquatic plants. This is a long article that covers many topics and uses for aquatic plants. It is well worth taking the time to read it.

24  **NOW - A Web Directory – Just About Us**
    Tom Graham, TC Publishing, Inc.

In the huge world of the Internet, getting found is job 1. Now our industry has its own directory, and you can be included for free or cheap.

27  **Tom T’s Koi Kichi Korner – High-Fin Banded Shark**
    Tom Tower, Niagara Aquarium

Just as goldfish are a good addition to your retail store so are High-fin Banded Sharks. Learn what they are and where they come from. Did you know they can grow over a yard in length? They may be a great addition for your customers with water gardens or koi ponds. Something new to add this year?

28  **Key Components of Water Quality**
    Dave Kelly, Aquascape, Inc.

We have all heard about ammonia in a pond, what about alkalinity and hardness. Don’t let water chemistry scare you. Keep adding to
your knowledge so you can help provide the best possible water quality for your customer’s pond.

32 **COVER – Planning for a Diversified Customer Base**
Rick Smith, EasyPro Pond Products

Are you ready for the Gen X’s? The pond industry is always changing, new products, new designs and new customers. Do you know what your changing customer base is going to want? Learn about the importance of diversifying designs & services, the benefits of establishing business partnerships and how product knowledge is key more than ever.

38 **Can You Afford Discounts**
Mark E. Battersby, Freelance Author

Should you provide discounts? What are the Pro’s and Con’s of discounting? You may even be able to profit by offering discounts. When a discount is offered to you by a manufacturer do you take advantage of it, and why you should or should not. Do you know what “2/10 net 30” means? Accounting may not be your forte, so learn from a 25 year accounting professional to help you make informed decisions.

40 **Info Tanza 2011 – San Diego**
John Olson, IPPCA President

This event was a smashing success. It started with Ponditat in Loma Linda, CA and then it moved down to the convention center in San Diego. There were excellent seminars, a delicious banquet, awards ceremony and many great memories.

46 **Finishing UP – Spring is Just Around the Corner**
Photo by Carolyn Weise

**Web Exclusive Article – 8th Annual Blue Thumb Pond Expo**
Aaron Scarlata, PondBuilder, Inc. & Blue Thumb Distributing, Inc.

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See the new Industry Directory at pondsources.com
Upcoming Events

March 28–31
Aquaponics Design and Technology Workshop
Apopka, Florida
Hosted by Aquatic Eco-Systems, Inc and Green Sky Growers
Anyone interested in more information regarding the March 2012 Aquatic Eco-Systems Aquaponics Workshop is urged to email, Ponics@AquaticEco.com

May 1 – 3
National Hardware Show
Las Vegas Convention Center
9 shows within a show including the Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Living Show
www.nationalhardwareshow.com

June 13
California Grown Show and The Nursery Mart
Long Beach, California
www.cangc.org

August 17–19
2012 Nursery/Landscape Expo
Houston, Texas
www.nurserylandscapeexpo.com

August 21–23
Independent Garden Center Show
Chicago, CA www.igcshow.com
Also see Pondeconomium event listing.

August 23–26
Pondemonium 2012
Chicago, Illinois
Will dovetail with the Independent Garden Center Show in Chicago
www.pondemonium.com
www.aquascapeinc.com

September 27–29
The Landscape Show
Orlando, Florida
Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association
www.flnga.org

October 2–5
Watersmart Innovations 2012
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.watersmartinnovations.com

November 4–5
Irrigations Show 2012
Orlando, Florida
http://www.irrigation.org

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

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Publisher’s Perspective

Thoughts About Cancelled Event

In February the National Association of Pond Professionals (NAPP) cancelled their 2012 Water Feature Conference & Expo. They noted that the show would not yield a worthwhile return on the investment for exhibitors, presenters and organizers – due to insufficient attendee registrations. Attendance has been the challenge facing numerous events planned for this niche, including fellow association the International Professional Pond Companies Association (IPPCA). IPPCA held their 7th Annual INFO TANZA last November.

While both trade organizations have worked hard to develop an event with valuable seminars and trade shows, our industry has not embraced them in the numbers really necessary to make economic sense for the supporters whose financial participation is so critical to staging these events.

I believe we, as an industry, need a strong industry association. But to date, something is holding us back. Some say it’s the economy, which has clearly devastated our businesses harder than many others. I would argue that when times are tough, we need an association more than ever, to help our businesses navigate these treacherous waters.

It has been noted that having two associations, dilutes resources. But NAPP and IPPCA are very different organizations, and have not been able to find a way to consolidate their efforts, in any kind of unification effort. Possibly the cancellation of the NAPP event will be the catalyst that will help bring about change now. I must say I hope so.

Both organizations have staged worthy events. To IPPCA’s credit, they have held seven in a row, and their 2011 event had its highest attendance ever, with over 100 attending their seminars, and a thousand or more visiting the Pond Pavilion. Good work, but not good enough, if an association is going to reach its potential as a vital service to this industry.

The majority of you reading this have never attended a NAPP or IPPCA event. I ask you why not? What would it take for you to attend? Since these events are designed specifically to help you be more successful in your pond business, what is missing that you have stayed home?

Your industry needs to hear what is important to you. What value do you need to receive in order to get you out of your office and to a Pond Industry Seminar/Expo? What areas of your business are driving you crazy, that you could use some help with?

Your industry leaders need your input, to be able to stage events that are as relevant as possible.

I invite you to sound off on this today. Please visit this column on our website at http://www.pondtrademag.com/issues/id-38/ and share your thoughts.

"Because you can’t always get what you want, but you might find, you get what you need.” – Rolling Stones

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www.abc-ponds-book.com

Want to learn the basics about football? Take a look at this book by POND Trade Magazines Editor. Available on Amazon.com - search for Kick Start, Graham.
From space ‘the earth’ is a giant blue marble, with water so prevalent it literally colors our very perception of the globe. In the face of such abundance, it is hard to imagine how scarce a resource fresh water is. 97.3% of the water on the planet is salty, useless to terrestrial plants and animals. Of the 2.7% left, more than 2% is frozen. Paradoxically, on a world three-quarters covered by water, less than three-quarters of one percent is available for the needs of every land organism on the planet.

We have always known rain as a most precious gift from the heavens. The earliest evidence we have of rainwater collection waterworks dates back 5,000 years, at Jawa Dam in Jordan. The fabled Biblical cisterns of King Herod at Masada are still in perfect condition. From the rooftops of Pompei to the Stepped Wells of India, rainwater harvesting has always been a crucial technology, even now.

Rainwater Harvesting has roots in America extending back to the founding fathers. In 1791 Thomas Jefferson installed 4 interconnected masonry tanks, 15,000 gallons in all, for making ale (contact me for the recipe!). Every town square had a firefighting reservoir, and even a cistern, right through the beginning of the 20th Century. Rainwater Harvesting isn’t new, but new technologies are bringing it once more to the fore.

Rainwater Harvesting equipment has come a long way in the last 100 years. Although the basic ideas haven’t changed, the way that rainwater is filtered and stored has entered the twenty first century.
Water Storage

In place of the stone, brick and concrete cisterns of the past, plastic storage containers in a range of sizes from rain barrels to 10,000 gallon tanks offer strong and convenient storage above and below ground. Even more versatile are lined and buried modular reservoirs filled with water matrices, because the space above them is available for landscaping, hardscapes or even light vehicle traffic. These are no mere ‘milk crates’ – for example, Eco-Blox matrices by Atlantic Water Gardens support over 14,000 pounds – each! The complete modularity they provide means that buried storage can be custom built to any size or shape, one piece at a time, perfect for restricted access areas and irregular spaces. Some of the latest devices might best be described as ‘rain pillows,’ large watertight bags that slowly empty to drip-irrigate gardens.

Filtration

Although rainwater is almost by definition “clean” water, the process of collecting it usually introduces pollutants. Water coming off a roof may wash pollen, dust, leaves, droppings, even roofing debris into the stored water. Sediment traps work by collecting the water in a series of wells, with water filling then overflowing into the next, leaving heavy sediments behind while allowing relatively cleaner water to overflow into storage, while a screen excludes lighter debris. Sediment traps have been in existence for millennia. More sophisticated “First Flush” devices work by diverting the initial rainfall to waste, then after the roof is washed clean, a valve shunts the now-clean runoff into storage. The two types differ in two important ways: sediment traps are typically installed at soil level and can gravity feed only buried reservoirs, and need to be cleaned out periodically. First flush diverters are usually mounted on downspouts as high as desired, so they can gravity feed both above-ground tanks and barrels as well as below-ground storage systems, and they are typically self-cleaning.

Potential for Collection

Regardless of the hardware chosen, two questions always arise – how much water can actually be collected and stored, and why would anyone bother with water costs typically very low?

With 27,000 gallons per acre in every inch of rainfall, even at the household level, every 1,000 square feet of roof area delivers 600 gallons per inch of rain. The harvested rainwater goes farthest with drip irrigation of low demand native landscapes and xeriscapes, but there’s an essential disconnect between what is needed for irrigation of high water demand landscapes and what can economically be stored.

A 2,000 square foot house with a quarter-acre of bluegrass lawn can conceivably collect 1,200 gallons per inch of rainfall, while requiring about one inch a week, well over 6,000 gallons of irrigation. It would take five inches of rain to fill a 6,000 gallon reservoir with enough for a week’s worth of watering, and that reservoir would have to measure about 800 cubic feet, say 10’ x 20’ x 4’. Obviously that’s a lot of costly storage for a very thirsty lawn, and with water so inexpensive, the return on investment just isn’t there… UNLESS legislation is factored in.
Current Trends in Legislation

The actual cost of water is still relatively low in most areas (though that may not be true for much longer), but there is another factor that has begun to make Rainwater Harvesting a sound investment with a tangible return on investment. In many areas around the country the need for new and updated infrastructure has led to the adoption of stormwater mitigation fees and taxes. Those who install rainwater harvesting systems, and their close companions rainwater retention systems that percolate harvested water back into the water table, may be eligible for rebate or even complete exemption from annual fees, which can mean substantial savings. There are no hard and fast guidelines as to which municipalities might offer programs or rebates, so the installer or property owner must investigate whether such opportunities exist in their local area, but there is no dispute that these taxes, and rebates, are increasing in amount, frequency and distribution.

Some Examples

ARIZONA – One-time 25% Rainwater Harvesting credit (max $1000 residents, $200 builders)
Tucson, AZ – First to require Rainwater Harvesting to supply 50% of commercial irrigation
COLORADO – changed “first in time, first in right” doctrine to allow rural harvesting
TEXAS – allows State taxing orgs to exempt all or part of properties with Rainwater Harvesting
Austin, TX – Subsidizes rain barrels and cisterns, up to $40K
San Antonio, TX – 50% rebates to commercial, industrial, institutional installations
Albuquerque, Bernalillo and Santa Fe Co, NM - Residences with 2,500 sq ft or more area must install an active rainwater catchment system comprised of cisterns. All commercial developments are required to collect all roof drainage into cisterns to be reused for landscape irrigation
CALIFORNIA – several water districts offer rebates, San Francisco discounts Rainwater Harvesting cisterns
OREGON – State Code Appendix M sets potable/non-potable guidelines
ILLINOIS – SB 2549 still pending, allows for Rainwater Harvesting in plumbing codes
FL, HI, NC, OH, UT, VA, WA – all adopting either Rainwater Harvesting or Stormwater Management regulations
Two great ideas that work great together

Rainwater Harvesting and Pond-free Water Features go hand in hand, sharing 90% of their components and construction procedures, and perfectly complementing each other. Each system requires a pump and the construction of a lined reservoir, and each adds beneficial qualities to the other. The action of a small bubbler, or waterfall, oxygenates and keeps stored rainwater fresh, while the reservoir of a pond-free system needs only a First Flush Diverter to become an ideal, attractive rainwater storage tank. With most of the work done either way, the addition of a Rainwater Harvesting system to a Pond-free one or vice versa offers the potential of doubling profits with little additional expense to the installer.

About the Author

Demi Fortuna is Director of Product Information for industry leader Atlantic Water Gardens, traveling and working with contractors and distributors alike in developing targeted Atlantic sales support materials. Fortuna has over 25 years of experience in all aspects of water garden design and construction, the last ten years in product research, development, sales and product training. When he isn’t presenting complex topics via seminars and lectures in an accessible, enjoyable manner, he can usually be found up to his elbows in pond slime working with his two sons, Edwin and Ely, in their water feature design/build business August Moon Designs. Demi can be contacted at demi@atlanticwatergardens.com or visit www.facebook.com/AugustMoonDesigns

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The name *tategoi* is one of the most misused terms in the koi industry. It means "unfinished future koi," a fish with potential to become a very high-class fish. The problem with the term is that new hobbyists don’t know how tough *tategoi* are to find, and dealers like to use terms like this to help sell koi.

The thing about true *tategoi* is that they can take years to finish, be very expensive, or never develop the way everyone thought they would. That is the risk when buying high-class koi.

*Tosai* (one growing season koi) are a very high risk. It is very hard to tell the future or sex of the koi even by the best breeders. *Tategoi* at this stage can run upwards of a $1,000 and I have seen some sold for $10,000.

My friend Masaru Saito, Shintaro Koi Farm, produces about 100,000 Sanke fry. 2,000 *tategoi* are kept after the first 3 months. By 7 months this number is reduced to 1,000, then before the 1-year age mark, they are reduced further to just 200, so that $1,000 to $10,000 *tategoi* might just end up as a cull. Saito says that only 20% of koi after the first 3 months become *tateshita*, and only 1% or less will stay on to become *tategoi* after the first year. I usually recommend against my customers buying them unless they truly understand the risks.

At the age of *nisai* (two growing seasons old) the amount of *tategoi* has dwindled to just about 20. It is now easier to tell the future of the koi and the sex, and the price reflects this. This does not mean the other 180 were no good. It means that there are just 20 that the breeder wants to keep for more growing on. He reckons that 20% of koi after the first cull become good *tateshita*, and only 1% of these become *tategoi*. See picture (C) for top *tategoi* at *nisai*.

---

**Picture A** - This Kohaku was still available for sale. She is one of the most stunning koi I have ever seen. Something about this koi begs me to buy it. If I had the 1.5m¥, it would be all mine. She has a perfect body, skin, beni, and pattern. This koi will one day be one of the best no doubt. I get excited seeing koi of this caliber. It is so rare to find something like this. But when you see it, you know at first glance you need to go for it. I saw her harvested and I knew she is “the one,” I pick her to be the top. I kept going into the greenhouse to see this koi, to find a flaw. I couldn’t find any. She was perfect in every way albeit a little different than the "normal" looking Kohaku. A koi like this is meant to be shown off, you don’t have something this beautiful and not want the world to see. She will no doubt win many trophies at many shows around the world.
**Picture B** - The Sanke pictured is the highest quality top nisai produced this year by Shintaro Koi Farm. This koi costs 1.5m ¥ to buy now and will remain in Japan for a few years to grow on and develop. To most people this koi will look like just an ordinary Sanke, but it is quite the contrary. The skin luster is awesome, the body and bone structure is excellent, and the sumi is developing in all the right spots. The shoulder sumi will come up and the sashi (front edge of the red) will finish sharp, not blurry. At a small size this koi pattern looks large, but remember it is 56cm now; at 85cm this koi will grow into its pattern and look awesome. This is true tategoi.

**Picture C** - Here are some examples of the highest quality of tategoi:

These are the breeder’s #1 tosai. He has about 1,000 of them right now, and you can take your pick for a really high price. The breeder will sell you these koi for a good price but would want for you to pick a few, not just one. The beni (red) on these koi is very thick and has good elastic qualities, which means it will not break up as the koi continues to grow. The sumi (black) on the koi is jet black and mostly up. This will change greatly as the koi matures. Very high class sumi will sometimes go under the skin for a year before coming back up to the surface. Finally, the skin on all the koi should have luster or shine. This is very important. I won’t go into this because I can write pages upon pages on koi skin (see Matt’s article about Skin Quality in the Jan/Feb 2012 issue), and how it makes the fish high quality. Body is not culled for at this age, only deformities will be culled.
Now during this whole process, the koi that are *tategoi* are sold as *tateshita*, or finished fish. Here is where it gets tricky. A good percentage of these are *tategoi*, but the breeder sells them off because he sees no more benefit in keeping the koi for growing on. This does not mean in anyway these koi are bad, they are just not of the top ones. I see many times in Japan when a customer wants a koi to be *asukara* (or kept with the breeder another year of grow out) and the breeder says no or gives a reluctant yes. This is because it is a waste of time and money to try to grow a koi that is finished; you can do that in your own pond. Do the math: you buy a koi for $1,000 at *nisai*, you store it for $500 one year, at *sansai* you ship it $500, you just paid $2,000 for a fish that is still worth $1000, not to mention all the work the breeders have to put into it so it grows and thrives.

Now, how much do you pay for top *tategoi*? I don’t really know, every breeder is different. If you pay $1,000 for a *nisai*, you can be pretty sure it is a nice *tateshita*. Now we have had customers pay 1.5m¥ (about $19,500) for top *nisai*, but this represents the top of the top. Go to a big name breeder, you can surely expect to pay more. I have heard a rumor that the top *nisai* from any breeder can be had for 500,000¥, but this is pure rubbish. They will always cost much more than that.

Now I have been on the Internet and seen people talking about *tategoi*. The truth is many have never seen a true *tategoi*. And somehow *tateshita* is a bad word to call a koi. I have many people in my shop that ask for *tategoi* but don’t want to pay more than $250. It does not exist. What does exist are many levels of *tateshita*. I have seen high-class *tateshita* develop into better koi than what the breeder kept as *tategoi*, but they too cost a good amount of money.

**About the Author**

Matt Corino is the owner of Sugar Loaf Koi – NYKOI.com. He has been in business for over 18 years. Matt started in koi when he was only 14 years old, studying koi at one of England’s largest koi centers. At 18 he took his first trip to Japan, where he studied under Sakai Isawa, then Shintaro.

Sugar Loaf Koi is a family owned business located near New York City in Campbell Hall, NY.

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Visa
The Use of Aquatic Plants for Algae Control in Domestic Ponds

by David Curtright
pondplants.com

Introduction

The use of aquatic plants for algae control follows two long-established principles among serious pond builders and water gardeners. They are that no pond will look its best without some plant material in it, and that those plants can be used to control algae. Still, in my experience, only a few builders actually provide for them, which leads to lost opportunities for plantings that are both aesthetically pleasing and ecologically useful.

The best way to think of plants in connection with algae control is to regard them as adjuncts to the filtration system. All aquatic plants that grow with their roots or leaves exposed to the water derive all of their nutrients directly from the water. Algae are no different from any other fast growing aquatic plant except that algae are more opportunistic than most other plants, and their ability to get a foothold in a pond while the other plants are in insufficient supply or are in their dormancy is legendary.

In any healthy, so-called “balanced” system, the ammonia that is produced by the metabolisms of the fish and other animals within the pond, as well as the proteins released into the water by uneaten food, decaying garden snails and other garden debris, smog, pine pollen, etc., is, in its turn, further metabolized by particular bacteria in a process called nitrification, in which ammoniacal nitrogen is oxidized into nitrate, which is plant food. Anybody who has kept an organic garden or who paid attention in school has heard of “nitrogen fixing” bacteria. Nitrogen “fixation” means that nitrification has occurred, and that the nitrogen that was formerly unavailable to most plants, now is.

I say “unavailable to most plants” because some plants can process nitrogen that hasn’t been completely “fixed,” and so can tolerate less healthy systems than species that depend upon well-fixed nitrogen. Many of these more tolerant species include some of the algae that plague pond owners everywhere. I’ve always said that there is an alga for everybody, and it’s true. Algae have been around long enough that they have figured out a way to live almost everywhere on the planet. The pond keeper must then acknowledge that there will almost always be some algae in his pond. He should keep the pond clean, but not spotless; well planted but not weedy or overgrown, or as I always say, “natural but not wild, maintained but not manicured.” All of that starts with the proper set-up. One in which there are provisions made for functional plants, and for efficient and adequate filtration and debris removal.

Before I go any further, I would like to say a few words in defense of algae. It is appropriate to bear in mind that a bit of algae in a pond is not the end of the world. Algae are noble organisms. In the natural state, they perform several useful functions. Among these are, obviously, the processing of nitrogen and carbon, and the production of oxygen. They also provide rooting media for higher plants, they provide food for many organisms including snails, fish, and birds, and they provide habitat in which other aquatic organisms can thrive. Anybody who has been in this business long enough has seen ponds in which the algae were the only things keeping the fish alive. Their capacity to consume nitrate and to produce oxygen...
makes them very effective filtering agents in their own right, and in some instances, they are quite attractive.

As before, there is an alga for everybody, and each pond will grow some combination of algal species according to the conditions in the pond. Factors such as water chemistry, sun exposure, fish population, feeding habits, how much debris gets into the pond from the garden, and how good the filtration is will all play a part in determining which species of algae will grow.

What is an Alga?

The term alga comes to us directly from Latin, alga, which means seaweed, or rubbish. Alga is singular, while algae is plural. They should both be pronounced with a hard g, as in good, but we in America have softened the g in the plural, while sensibly maintaining the hard g in the singular (on those rare occasions when we use it at all).

A host of organisms fall under the heading of “algae.” In the modern sense, the term “alga” refers to any simple, photosynthetic aquatic organism, and so applies to several groups. Some of the most common, such as “blue green algae” are actually bacteria, cyanobacteria in this case, that happen to produce chlorophyll and phycocyanin, which gives them their distinctive color. Blue green “algae” can be found growing in thick colonies in dark areas of many ponds, on piles of fine sludge or beneath other species of algae, and they can process nitrogen where other organisms cannot. In fact, they tend to fix the nitrogen for other plants. I have read that in some Asian rice paddies, Azolla, which is a symbiont of the cyanobacterium, Anabaena azollae, is used to good effect in conditioning the soil for each year’s crop, acting as a sort of green manure. Their presence is an indication that something might be amiss in the pond.

Other common species of algae include Spirogyra, or “string algae,” which forms dense colonies in water and at its surface. Unicellular algae, which stain water green or brown, are commonly seen in new ponds. Brown algae are often found in slimy layers inside of pipes or in blooms of suspended colonies comprising billions of unicellular organisms. There are more complex algal species, such as Chara, which forms dense, malodorous colonies throughout the water column, or Nitella, which forms dense, multi-branched, clumping colonies among higher plants. Both of these attach to the substrate with thickened stems that become buried in the silt.

In any pond it is usually the case that there is more than one species of alga present. One species might do well in a shady area of the pond while another might prefer the brightly lit weir of a waterfall. Their growth will come and go with the seasons, and while they might seem to have disappeared for periods of time, they will return when they can.

Whichever ones grow, it is certain that they are growing on a supply of nutrients that is not being utilized by anything else, either because other plants are not present, or because they are unable to gain access to the nutrient supply. This might be because the water hasn’t been properly conditioned in the filter, or because the water doesn’t flow enough, but more frequently it is because the plants have been put into areas where they never see the nutrients or where they might have grown to the point where the dissolved nutrients never penetrate to the active roots.

It follows, then, that where and how plants are placed, and which plants are used are three of the most critical factors in using aquatic plants to control algae.

Types of Plants

I think that a discussion of the types of plants that are available is warranted here. Aquatic plants can be divided into four loosely associated groups. The criterion for inclusion in any group is growth habit.

Group 1

The first of the four groups is the so-called “oxygenators,” which are those plants that grow entirely submerged except, in some cases, to bloom. They maintain foliage under the water so all of the oxygen that they produce goes directly into the water until it is unable to absorb it any further, whereupon the oxygen rises through the water as bubbles that emerge directly and observably from the leaves. All of the nutrients that these plants use to grow are derived directly from the water, which makes them useful as competition for some algae. They might root into the substrate or not, but they never leave the water except to bloom. The juvenile forms of some ultimately emergent plants serve as efficient oxygenators while they are under water, and in fact, many aquarium plants are the immature forms of plants that really prefer to be above the water, where they can bloom and make seeds. They have simply evolved to withstand long periods of immersion, as opposed to short ones.

Entirely submerged Oxygenators – Species whose juvenile forms act as oxygenators. (All of the species listed are commonly available.)

- Anacharis
- Bacopa monnieri
- Ceratophyllum
- Lemna trisulca
- Ludwigia palustris
- Pontederia spp.
- Sagittaria subulata
- Typha spp.

Anacharis Bacopa amplexicaulis
Bacopa monnieri Cabomba caroliniana
Ceratophyllum Hygrophila difformis
Lemna trisulca Limnophila spp.
Ludwigia palustris Myriophyllum spp.
Pontederia spp. Rotala rotundifolia
Sagittaria subulata Sagittaria spp.
Typha spp. Vallisneria spp.

Of course, oxygenators as efficient users of dissolved nutrients as they are, are not the only thing to use to combat algae. In fact, I can’t tell you how many times I’ve combed string algae from my Anacharis or Ceratophyllum as I cleaned a pond or
collected the plants for orders. It is also possible to get too many of them in a pond. This can be because they just make it difficult to see the fish, or for the fish or other animals to move around in the water, or because plants reverse their respiration at night, consuming oxygen and producing carbon dioxide. I maintain a 230,000 gallon pond wherein the Ceratophyllum grew to such an extent that the fish were at the surface gasping for air one early morning. As soon as the sun touched the water, the fish were all right again. Lesson learned.

**Group 2**

The second group includes those plants that grow with their feet in the substrate and their leaves afloat on the surface of the water. This includes the genera Nymphaea (Waterlilies), Nymphoides (Water Snowflakes), Hydrocleis (Water Poppy), Brasenia (Water Shield), Aponogeton distachyos (Water Hawthorn), and many of the Marselia (Water 4-Leaf Clover) species. Most of these do very little for water quality beyond the extent to which they can use nutrients from the substrate that would otherwise be available to algae. In one sense, these plants can be thought of as conduits for soil nutrients to get into the water because they use nutrients to create their leaves and flowers, which subsequently decay, releasing all of their constituents into the water. But they do shade the water, and none of us would willingly forego having waterlilies in our ponds just because they do virtually nothing against algae. I have used their pots to harbor Anacharis or other submersent plants. Also, all of the Nymphoides and the two species of Hydrocleis produce floating colonies of numerous, well-rooted plants, each of which uses nitrogen and other nutrients from the water.

**Group 3**

The third group includes those plants that float directly on the water, extending their roots into the water and their leaves into the air. Within this group are the obvious candidates, Eichhornia azurea and E. crassipes, Pistia stratioides, Azolla spp., Lemma minor, Salvinia spp., and various creeping plants, such as Myriophyllum spp., Aeschynomene fluviatilis, Neptunia repens, and Ludwigia spp. These are particularly useful in stripping all types of nutrient from the water. Hyacinths are well known for their ability to cleanse water of everything from nitrogen to heavy metals. The group includes some of the more interesting and beautiful plants in the hobby today, as well as some that are wisely banned in many states.

**Group 4**

The fourth group comprises those plants that have their feet in the water and their leaves well above it. It includes all of the familiar tall bog plants, including, Nelumbo, Sagittaria, Pontederia, Hibiscus, etc. As with Nymphaea, and some of its cohorts in Group 2, they do very little to filter the water while they are rooted in soil. I have used Iris pseudacorus and varieties of Pontederia (Pickerel Plant) as effective filters by planting them in pots and then allowing them to over-grow the pots. As soon as they begin to expose roots to the water, they begin to compete with algae for nutrients, but they won’t do it if they are rooted into a substrate.
Which are Best?

Which plants work best for filtering water? Plants that expose roots to the water are the best for algae control. Exposing submerged foliage is good, too, but nothing beats the power of water hyacinth or water cress to strip nutrients from water. Usually a combination of oxygenators and floating plants with roots in the water is sufficient to combat most algae.

Building the Pond for Plants

Any discussion of how to build a pond for successful use of aquatic plants must cover each aspect of the set-up, from digging the hole, to skimmer and filter placement, to the planting and maintenance of the pond. A poorly laid out pond will not perform as desired, regardless of how nice it might look on paper.

As a case in point

I was involved with a job many years ago wherein the pond was to be about 6 1/2’ deep, about 100’ in diameter, with an island in the middle. The estimated volume was 238,000 gallons. The original plan called for the filter to be built into a bed on the bottom of the pond. In a meeting of the principals one day, I brought up the scenario of what would have to happen 3 or 4 years hence, when it would be time to clean the filter. They would have to dump 238,000 gallons of water in a city where they look you up if they see too much water running down the gutter, remove, stow, and maintain the many large Koi, clean the several cubic yards of gravel, going through all of the time and water that that would entail, then re-fill the pond and get the fish back in before they were all dead from shock and asphyxiation.

They opted to replace that idea with an upward-flowing separate pond in which they would place a grate and cover it with crushed cinders. This was of only limited value, however, because it was impossible to clean thoroughly, and eventually became the primary source of nutrients for algae. We had to scrap it, and rebuild it so that instead of 3’ of lava rock, the water passed through one foot of it. The results were astonishing, and when a pressurized unit was added some time later, the pond never looked better.

Nevertheless, when they later added swans and ducks to the pond, the filtration could not keep up with the load until we added Hydrocotyl ranunculoides and Pistia stratioides to the filter pond. These were the only two species that we found were not immediately destroyed by the birds. Adding those plants cleared the water within a month of the plants’ introduction. And you’ve never seen such water lettuce.

I won’t get into a discussion of filtration except to say that, as the episode mentioned above illustrates, no filter is any better than it is easy to maintain. In the old days, we were stuck with filters built into the bottoms of ponds, or with upward-flowing filter ponds, and/or with pressurized sand filters that were built for pools and spas. The pressurized filters could be modified by making new laterals for the outflow, and by using crushed cinders instead of sand, but, because of the weight of the lava rock, they were difficult to backwash efficiently, and the nutrient load could become enormous before anybody thought to really clean it out. Again, in these ponds the filter can become the major part of any algae problems in the pond.

Now, however, the industries manufacturers have caught up with the hobby and there are very efficient filters available. Even using the new media in the old filters is a good thing. Backwashing is far more effective, with the result that the filter is at peak performance more of the time than before. Backwashing takes only moments, and uses far less water than washing lava rock did.

I will also say that the first line of defense against the unwanted accumulation of debris in the pond is the skimmer, and how they are placed can make a huge difference. I believe that they should go downwind of the prevailing winds. If the wind blows in two directions, put one at each end of the pond so that leaves blown into the pond can be skimmed off immediately. A skimmer also makes a good hole into which aphids or unwanted small floating plants can be rinsed.

Knowing as we do that what comes out of the filter is nitrate, and that nitrate is plant food, it makes sense to get to that nitrate solution as soon after the filter as possible with plants that are capable of stripping it from the water as it passes by them. Putting plants in the small filter box at the top of the waterfall is dangerous because they can quickly become so dense that the water can’t flow out quickly enough to prevent the filter tank from overflowing.

Placing pools and streams between the filter and the pond ensures that some portion of the system can be planted in such a way that a percentage of the nitrate will have been removed from the water before it gets back to the main pond. It also drives CO2 out of the water as it splashes over waterfalls and rocks in the stream. In-stream pools also provide settling areas for the fine silt that gets through the filter. They should be built with shelves along the sides for plants to sit on, and with a deeper area left in the middle for silt to settle into. This can be removed with a net. Streams should meander for interest and should include broad areas and narrow ones. The broad areas can be planted with shallow water bog plants to lend a more naturalistic look, and to provide an area for trailing plants with roots in the water. The narrow sections can be used to create sound and water-play.

The most commonly missed opportunity for plantings is along the margin of the pond. Even if a pond system has no stream, it has a margin, at least, and either algae or deliberately planted species will grow there. I would much rather see a nicely planted pond edge than a row of rocks with algae stuck to them.
The “shelves,” if there are any at all, are almost always inadequate. Sometimes I approach a pond to find that there has been absolutely no thought given to how the thing was to be planted. In many cases, all that is provided is a narrow, shallow rim that runs the circumference of the pond, with no change in its size or utility. Properly built shelves can support a very naturalistic planting, and if filtered water is pumped into these areas, the plants can be used to strip nutrients from the water.

Proper, filtering shelves should be deep enough for a 2-gallon pot to sit with its top about 4” below the water surface. Anything can be blocked up, but it is nearly impossible to create greater depth in most ponds once they are built, so it is advisable to make the shelves as large as possible and about 12” deep. It should be of random width, but it should always be wide enough to support any plantings that are anticipated. It should also be built with a retaining wall on the outside edge so that debris can collect there and not fall into the pond. The accumulated material can be removed with a net from time to time to eliminate it from the system.

As mentioned above, in order to maximize the filtering action of the plants, I have always recommended that people put filtered water back into the pond through the bog shelves. Even if it isn’t filtered, it will still be processed through the plants to good effect.
I prefer to establish anchor plantings in aesthetically pleasing ways, and to grow what I loosely refer to as “connectives,” or those plants, that start in one place and creep around (from Group 3), extending roots into the open water between the pots as they grow. What I call “anchor plantings” are specimens of tall, emergent plants (from Group 4) such as Iris, Pontederia, Hibiscus, etc, that are planted in pots if I intend to repot them each season, or want a tall mature specimen to develop, or it trays when I want colony of plants that need not be repotted more frequently than each two or three years. Trays allow rhizomatous plants such as iris to grow more naturally than a taller pot will.

If the plant population remains high relative to the nutrient supply, algae will be minimal. Seasonal changes demand that we plant a variety of species to ensure that something will be growing for as much of the season as possible. Here in southern California, that means all of the time.

Most of the time, when I approach a new pond for planting, I am faced with very little to work with. The ponds are usually full of loosely stacked rocks that want to fall into the pond when they are touched, and if any shelves are provided, they are generally hopelessly inadequate. Or the pond is just an empty box or bowl in the ground, with no features whatsoever. In some cases, it can be relatively easy to set trays at the appropriate level with concrete blocks. If the tray is filled with soil and the plants are properly planted in them, the planting will look good in very short order. Another option for featureless ponds whose owners do not want Goldfish or Koi is to plant the pond as one might plant an aquarium, with grass-like species (Sagittaria subulata, S. sub subulata, Lillaeopsis attenuata) growing in a sand medium, with Nymphaea, Echinodorus spp., etc. planted among them. It can be quite lovely, and should not be dismissed as a way to have a nice water garden in a small spot with little or no algae.

In the pond that has only rocks along the edge, however, planting can be a challenge. I get as much soil in there as I can by using pots, or by filling in between the rocks with gravel and sand until I can get something to stay in place long enough to get some roots growing. I look for species that will grow almost anywhere and on almost nothing. Lippia nodiflora, Bacopa monnieri, Marselia spp., and Rotala rotundifolia, are all good for this. Once these are established and have formed a mat that is substantial enough to support them, I add other, taller species. This can take a couple of years, and can be avoided by a well-informed builder.

In some cases, objects that hang into the pond, such as the roots of Philodendron plants, or Ivy, or some other terrestrial plant that has reached into the pond, can be planted with a selection of plants that produce colonies of plants such as Hyacinth. By trapping a few plants behind the root, branch, or pipe that reaches into the pond, one can, after a year or so, establish a floating mat of plants such as Eichhornia (Hyacinth), Rorippa (Cress), Mimulus guttatus (Marsh Monkey Flower), and other plants can be established. If this colony can be established near a water return line, so much the better.

The cardinal sin committed by pond builders today, in my opinion, is the inclusion of rocks on the bottom of the pond. I have recently learned that I am not alone in my condemnation of this practice. Apparently, I am not the only person to have noticed that they make it virtually impossible to remove debris from the bottom of the pond, and that they, themselves, provide a good substrate for various algae species to grow upon. Not only that, they are dangerous. It is very difficult to walk around on a bunch of rounded, head-sized stones that are slippery with algae and frequently out of sight without twisting an ankle, smashing a toe, or otherwise endangering the flesh. Also, putting stones on the bottom of the pond ensures that the maintainer of the pond will not be able to easily remove the very sort of nutrient load that algae grow on. It is especially bad when there is more than one layer of them. I have removed hundreds of stones from ponds in disgust at the waste of time and resources they represent, and the ecological problems within the pond that they cause. Having stones on the sides of the pond is acceptable, but not on the bottom.

One last point about setting up – Go Slowly. Don’t immediately overwhelm the pond with fish before the plants have had time to establish themselves. If the pond can ultimately hold as many as 10 fish, stop at 5, then after the pond has become established to the point where there are sufficient plants to deal with the load imposed by the fish, build up to the larger number of fish slowly. You’ve got the rest of your life to enjoy the pond; don’t risk making it unenjoyable by overwhelming it from the outset.

**Maintenance of Plantings**

Maintenance of the plantings that you depend upon to remove the bulk of the nutrients from the water is not difficult, but it does need to be done regularly for best results. There are the obvious tasks of regular removal of dead leaves and flowers from bog plants and Nymphaea (water lilies), and seasonal reporting of Nymphaea, Nelumbo (lotus), and other potted bog plants. But then there are the less obvious ones of removal of accumulated root masses from floating/creeping plants such as Rorippa spp. (Cress) and Ludwigia spp. (Primrose Creeper), and controlling aggressive species to ensure that they don’t overwhelm the less robust plants growing in the bogs.

Allowing the root masses of water cress to remain in the pond is to encourage algae and fungi. The roots of cress are fine enough to make an excellent filter for the fine silt that gets through the filter, and when it all dies, which it will do, it falls apart directly into the water, releasing its load of debris and feeding algae all the while. All of that matter can be removed
in one motion by carefully removing the root mass once it has died at the end of the season. It also allows the new roots of the cress to grow into open water again, instead of into the mass of dead roots, where it will not see new water. We do this in the spring when it has finished blooming, and in the fall when it is fully grown and needs to be thinned for next year’s growth. Removing only what is visible above the water leaves behind the real prize, which is all of that silt.

Regular removal of debris from the bottom of the pond is a must, as well. I like to leave some of it behind in the winter to allow the fish a warm place to go into when things really get cold, but I remove it as soon as I can in the spring. Sludge removal can be accomplished with a net, and does not need to be done with a siphon or other vacuuming device. These only waste water.

I know that it is popular to dump the water and to clean the ponds each season, but I disagree with that approach, and wouldn’t empty a pond unless there was no other option. This is an especially important issue in the southwestern states, where water comes at a premium. It is a different question in Wisconsin, but here, dumping water needlessly is rightly frowned upon by all. I have ponds that haven’t been torn down for 20 years and they have no problems with algae. I simply remove the debris with my net with each maintenance visit and that works fine. My ponds get partial water changes with the back-flushing of the filters.

If the pond has one of the upward-flowing “bio-falls” filters, I keep it clean, but I do not depend upon it to completely treat the water, especially in large ponds. I would prefer to immediately throw the bags of lava rock out and talk the customer into a pressurized unit that will really filter the water, instead of just providing a fat spot with useless inclusions into the plumbing system. If they don’t want the filter, I still feel as though I am better off without the bags of gravel. They are only as good as the bag is capable of passing water, and if it is easier for the water to flow around the bag, that is what it will do. Once the bottom of the bag plugs up, the water flows around the bag, leaving the ammonia essentially untouched. Also, these filters are often placed at the tops of hills, buried in landscaping, and so are difficult to service safely, so they are often neglected.

As part of the effort to limit the build-up of organic debris, I do not allow material from without the pond to get into the pond in the first place. I go to great lengths sometimes to anticipate the arrival of debris from the garden, going to points in surrounding rocks where debris piles up before going into the pond.

Feeding pond plants can be a matter of some concern among pond keepers because of the obvious issues associated with introducing fertilizer to the water. I feed my plants with a timed release fertilizer at the beginning of the season, and after that only if it is absolutely necessary. I feed established plantings of bog plants twice per year by gingerly sprinkling the same timed release fertilizer into the plants nearer the outside edge of the plantings than the water side. As it dissolves, the plants pick it up as needed.

Conclusion

While plants are an integral part of any aquatic system, and it is true that they can eliminate many problems related to algae, they cannot be depended upon to do the entire job all of the time. They might do it all of the time in a particular pond, but they will not be able to do it all in every pond. They need assistance, and that can come in the form of having proper places provided for them, and with proper maintenance. It also comes in the assiduous limitation and constant removal of organic debris from the pond by the pond owner, limiting fish populations to reasonable levels, and by the complete conversion of water-borne nutrients into forms useful to the plants.

About the Author

David Curtright
He is also the current President of the Southern California Water Garden Society.

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The Internet is a big place. Yet it has become a vital part of every business’s life, whether acknowledged as such or not. Today’s shoppers’ buying habits have been forever changed, by the wealth of information now available to them on their smart phones, tablets and PC’s.

According to Google’s site, zeromomentoftruth.com, shoppers are now checking the web for information on products they have heard about, to make the buying decision in such great numbers, that a new term has been coined called the Zero Moment of Truth, (ZMOT).

Where traditional marketing defined the buying decision steps as “trigger, response,” now there is a new step. Research. Never before could a shopper find information about a product they are interested in as well as competing products so readily. Now a mom can look up a toy her child mentions, find the correct name, read reviews, shop price, find a location that has it, and buy it, without ever leaving home. And it is happening thousands of times every day.

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The reason Google is talking about this is to highlight the importance of the content and marketing of a business’s web site.

In a universe of millions of sites, what can a business do to improve the chances that shoppers will find their site? This is a huge question with plenty of experts promoting their services through books, sites, blogs, and service contracts.

As we at POND Trade Magazine discussed what we could do to help our industry and its members, we settled on developing a centralized place where retail and wholesale shoppers could find a comprehensive list of products and services available, and where to get them. The result is pondsources.com.

We settled on a directory site as the best format, as it provides a means of finding all the manufacturers of a given product type—something you can’t find in any other way. Thus, a person can compare product specs directly from all the relevant manufacturers’ sites. Not just a sub-set like an individual dealer would list.

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How about a new fish this year? We always get Koi, Koi, Koi. What else? We did Orfes, etc., but we’ve got one now I’m going to call the “Buffalo Fish” (like wings, beef on weck sandwich 😋). It’s the Chinese High-Fin Banded Shark (Myxocyprinus asiaticus).

It comes from the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. They like cold water and stretches of warm weather, but are happiest kept cool. They have a peaceful temperament, sometimes exhibit a playful swimming manner, and are known to change color depending on their mood. The sharks are omnivorous bottom dwellers that can be fed dried, live or frozen food (including brine shrimp, vegetables and blood worms).

Come in and take a look. These are sweet, big sharks! The fish can grow to over a yard, but they grow slower than Koi. They will live a long time. High-Fin Banded Sharks are a great addition to your customer’s pond. So you can now play the theme music from “Jaws” this summer by the Pond.
Key Components of Water Quality

by Dave Kelly
Vice President of Product Development
Aquascape, Inc.

Photos provided by Aquascape, Inc.

When a pond builder puts shovel to soil, foremost on his/her mind should be the goal to create an ecosystem pond that produces superior water quality. While the customer may focus more on the design of the waterfall and type of fish and plants, it’s the pond contractor’s job to ensure that healthy water supports the life forms residing in the water garden.

Water chemistry need not be a scary topic. Quite the opposite is true. Understanding water and how it responds to environmental influences should be a basic tool in every pond professional’s belt. While fully mastering water’s intricacies can seem daunting, becoming familiar with a few key components like pH and nutrients will provide you with confidence and skills to create balanced ecosystems for your customers.

Potential of Hydrogen

A familiar term you should understand as a pond professional is pH, which stands for “potential of hydrogen.” The last time you probably heard about it was during a shampoo commercial. Essentially, pH describes the relation of hydrogen ions to hydroxyl ions on a 14-point scale. The higher the
hydrogen content and the lower the hydroxyl content, the more acidic the water becomes. Conversely, the higher the hydroxyl content and the lower the hydrogen content, the more basic the water.

When the hydrogen and hydroxyl ions are in complete balance, the water is neutral. On the 14-point scale, a pH of 7 is neutral. On the same scale, numbers higher than 7 are called basic (or mistakenly, “alkaline”), while numbers lower than 7 are termed acidic.

Your typical pond falls in a pH range from 6 to 11, which covers ground from slightly acidic water to strongly basic. So for example, a pH of 8.2 is highly acceptable for pond water, while a pH of 4 (which is acidic enough to dissolve nails) would be unacceptable if your aim is to sustain aquatic life.

Many factors can influence the pH values found in water. The presence of dissolved metals and materials has perhaps the biggest effect on pond water. These substances are commonly called buffers, and are typically discussed in terms of alkalinity and hardness.

Alkalinity: When present at high levels, alkaline materials tend to hold the water’s pH at higher levels. The concentration of these buffers is expressed as parts per million (ppm).

Hardness: A specific form of alkalinity, hardness refers to the amount of dissolved calcium, calcium carbonate and magnesium in the water. Water is termed “hard” when levels of these materials reach 300 ppm or higher.

When present at higher levels, these buffering factors tend to stabilize pH. In fact, when hardness and alkalinity values are high, it’s less likely a pond will experience significant fluctuations in pH.

Aquatic Nutrition

Beyond pH, there are other contributors to water quality that must be considered, namely, the macronutrients and micronutrients that help sustain life in aquatic systems. Seventeen of these essential ingredients — three macronutrients and 14 micronutrients — need to be included in ponds and streams.

Macronutrients are what you find in commercial fertilizer mixes. For example, when you see a fertilizer that says 20-10-20, the numbers refer to the percentage (by volume) of nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), and potassium (K) in the mix. These are the nutrients required in the largest quantities for proper plant growth.

Nitrogen: In a pond, nitrate and ammonia are the most common forms of available nitrogen. High levels of either of these substances are good for plants (especially algae) but are toxic to most fish, so it’s best if they are undetectable or held at very low levels.
**Phosphorus:** Again, in a pond situation it is best to have low or non-existent levels of phosphorus, which appears in the water in the form of phosphates. Although in the case of a pond, these substances are not problematic for fish, they do invite prolific algae growth and are best held at minimal levels.

**Potassium:** It’s rare to find high levels of potassium in pond ecosystems, but it wouldn’t be a problem in any event, because potassium is a key to both plant and fish metabolisms.

**Micronutrients**

The other category you need to consider features the micronutrients. Fourteen of them are required for life: boron (B), carbon (C), calcium (Ca), chlorine (Cl), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), hydrogen (H), magnesium (Mg), manganese (Mn), molybdenum (Mo), nickel (Ni), oxygen (O), sodium (Na), sulfur (S) and zinc (Z). Each is required in different ratios for different members of a pond-based ecosystem, and each plays a highly specialized role on the cellular level for all forms of life.

A well-designed pond system will often produce water that is balanced in terms of pH and nutrient content. When algal blooms or other water-quality issues arise, don’t hesitate to seek help in determining treatment regimens that can correct the situation.

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**About the Author**

Dave Kelly  
Vice President of Product Development, Aquascape, Inc.

Dave holds a bachelor’s degree in environmental science from Illinois State University, with an emphasis in constructed wetlands and natural methods for wastewater treatment.

www.aquascapeinc.com

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Like you, I have read multiple informative articles over the last three to five years on the changing customer base due to the shift from Baby Boomers. I appreciate those who have contributed information on this important topic, so why another article? Information sharing will be a continual process over the next few years as the transition continues. I will address or expand upon key factors creating trends and impacting the decisions on the mix of products and services, marketing plans, and what we need to focus on at the point of sales, now and into the future. These key points include

• The important difference between the population of each generation versus the population and mix of a buying group by age, currently, three, five, and eight years out.

• Why shifting all your focus over to a single generation and a lack of diversification of product would be a mistake, especially with water features.

• What real social and economical influences are changing Gen X’s priorities and life styles compared to the Baby Boomers, and it is not the unfair claims attributed to them being the “no dig generation,” lazy or possessing a poor work ethic, or just wanting to socialize all the time.
• Why when selling water features there is a tremendous benefit to diversifying feature designs, services, and the benefits of establishing business partnerships.

• Why Product Knowledge and Service is more important today than ever before.

Population by Generation versus Buying Group Demographics

There has been much focus on the mathematical impact of the 77 million Baby Boomers versus only 44 million Generation Xers. The important number is the demographics of the historically key discretionary buying group, ages 35 to 55. Since changing of the guard doesn’t happen all at once, say at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, it will be a transition mandating the wisdom of buying for, marketing and sales to three generations at the same time. Would you be shocked if I told you the head count for this group will not change that much?

Knowing the mix of customers that make up the market, the transitional time frame, and the social and economical trends that will most likely impact this group will have value. Below are a couple of key questions we can ask ourselves in regards to the buying group mix:

1. What is the total population of the 35 to 55 age buying group today, in three, five, and eight years?

2. What percent of my individual market will each group represent in three, five, and eight years?

When comparing the size of each generation, it isn’t apples to apples. The Baby Boomer generation is measured in an 18 year span, (1946 to 1964) while Gen X is measured in a 15 year span, (1965 – 1980), and Gen Y in a 14 year span, (1981 to 1995). However, by looking at yearly birth rates, we can then apply a sliding scale and interpret how many of each generation falls in the 35 to 55 and 25 to 55 age buying groups currently, three, five, and eight years out.

The following charts (seen on the next page) will show that it isn’t the population of a generation that is as important as the population and trends of the buying group you want to market to.

The 35 to 55 Age Buying Group Chart shows us that this key discretionary buying group stays semi consistent in the 79 to 73 million range for the next 8 year time frame.

Even when we look at the 25 to 55 Age Buying Group Chart, it also stays consistent at 115 to 113 million. It can be concluded there is not a significant drop in population of this group either.

The 35 to 55 Age Group by Percent Chart (chart on next page) is very interesting in that the percent of Gen X becomes increasingly significant by the year 2014. Notice that by 2019,
Gen Y has not yet become a driving force in this key discretionary buying group. The 25 to 55 Age Group by Percent Chart dramatically shows the shift. Even so, I still believe the 35 to 55 age group has a larger impact on our industry over the next eight years, and the 25 to 55 age group has a larger significance demographically on other industries right now. You’ll have to decide its impact for you and your business.
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**Real Social and Economical Influences**

You can virtually attribute change to one of three things: social, economical, or political. The social and economic pressures of today have changed the priorities for Gen Xers, which in turn influences their buying habits.

I also think Gen Xers have been unfairly tagged with certain descriptions by some, or at least without an understanding as to what is “truly” influencing
their priorities, and how it will play out over the next eight years. Understanding each of the issues provides an advantage enabling us to improve the marketing to the needs, and make adjustments accordingly to the social time tables before us.

Our industry relies heavily on home ownership. On average, Gen X is marrying, buying homes, and nesting in their late 20s or six years later than did the Baby Boomers. The question is...why? One factor is...the #1 priority for Gen Xers is to acquire personal and financial security before settling down with a home and family.

With more men and women completing higher education and increased college debt, securing a well paying career in a global economy demands mobility. Previously young women would get married and go wherever her husband had his career. Today more women are competing equally for those careers, and they too need to be willing to stay mobile in order to pursue career opportunities.

Surveys tell us that Gen Xers still want to get married one day, but not until they meet “the one” and are financially ready for such a commitment. Respondents frequently express the desire to “do it right – one time”. The biggest influence creating this mindset being that 50% of Gen Xers grew up with divorced parents and split homes.

Diversification of Water Features has a Tremendous Benefit

With such a diverse mix of customers and customer needs, it only makes sense that selling only water gardens would certainly limit your success. Homeowners with roots will trend towards water gardens, Just-A-Falls, and the fastest growing category hardscape designs that incorporate LED lit spillways or stainless steel spillway.

Fountains and statuary with basins, like EasyPro’s Tranquil Décor line, provides marketability to all customers, regardless of age group, while providing beauty and endless options for design placement. For those customers who need to stay mobile, the added advantages are a moveable water feature at a very reasonable cost.

LED lighting has come of age. For new installations or renovations, LED lighting is quickly replacing the old 20 watt systems, another example of add on sales with broad customer appeal and strong profit dollars for you.

Partnering up with other businesses is also a tactic to take advantage of and to support company growth. For example, a contractor/installer partnering with a lawn & garden center that doesn’t do their own installations. Team up with building contractors to add points of interest with water features, or be the water features expert for hardscape contractors who install block walls and patios. Commercial water features continue to do well as do fountains and aeration systems for small earthen ponds and commercial retention ponds. Overall, the opportunities are there if you successfully diversify.

Product and Service Knowledge at The Point of Sale Has Never Been As Important

I understand the need to balance sales staff hours with sales and peak customer counts. With that said, it is very important to provide the most knowledgeable sales staff at the point of sale.

Society is moving so fast these days that people don’t have the time to attend a one-hour seminar like they used to.
In fact, customers from all three of these generations use the web to conduct their research and most are more informed customers prior to arriving at your store or meeting with a contractor/installer. The sales staff, your front line, must be able to establish “trust” with the customer with product and industry knowledge. If the sales staff fails at this task, they fail to provide the “added value” to the relationship and the customer walks.

Unlike electronics, clothes, and other hard-goods, when it comes to home improvement projects and water features, today’s new homeowners still roll up their sleeves and are willing to dig in. They may do their research on the web, but still prefer to see it and touch it when making an in-store purchase or with their local contractor/installer.

The make-up of your targeted market is more important than the population of a given generation. For at least the next eight years diversification of water feature products for the 35 to 55 age market will be an advantage, and there is a water feature available for everyone no matter where they are in life.

Rick Smith serves as Director of Sales with EasyPro Pond Products and has 30 years of organizational leadership and sales and marketing experience in the Lawn & Garden Nursery and Water Features Industries. Prior to coming to EasyPro, Rick served as Sales and Marketing Manager of the retail division for J. Mollema & Son (a large mid-west lawn & garden distributor supplying independent garden centers nurseries, growers, and landscapers). He also spent 12 years with The Scotts Company working with independent business owners as well as regional and national chains.

For the past 17 years, water gardening has been one of Rick’s passions. While enjoying his own ponds and fish, Rick has had a focus on contributing to the enjoyment of other pond owners, as well as the success of business owners, by developing customized business plans, sales support material, and numerous power point training seminars.

Rick has appeared in various business trade publications both as an interviewee and as a contributing author. In addition, Rick has conducted seminars at trade shows, county extension services and Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park as well as retail staff training and public seminars on lawn & garden, wild birds, and water gardening topics.

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Everyone is aware of “discounts.” Discounts are offered to encourage a garden pond operation’s customers to pay faster. A number of service-oriented businesses, like doctors and dentists, offer a trade discount of sorts for immediate payment upon completion of their services.

Suppliers often extend discounts in an effort to improve their cash flow. Few garden pond retailers, distributors, builders, manufacturers or breeders, however, have given much thought to either the cost of offering discounts or how much can really be saved by taking advantage of those discounts.

Prompt payments from customers mean improved cash flow for the garden pond operation, a reduced need for borrowed working capital and far fewer collection problems. Little wonder, then, that so many businesses offer discounts and incentives to speed payments. But, how much can you profit taking advantage of discounts offered by suppliers?

Discount, What Discount?

Many garden pond businesses closely follow the old adage: always delay cash outflows. For a surprising number of garden pond professionals, that means always paying bills on time but never before they are due. In reality, however, most pond businesses would be better off paying a bill early to take advantage of the trade discount. Consider the math.

The supplier’s invoice includes credit terms, listing the period of time for which credit is extended, the size of the discount offered if the buyer pays cash, and the date the credit period begins. A cash discount is a reduction in the purchase price provided the buyer pays within a specific time period.

A typical supplier’s credit terms may be stated as “2/10 net 30.” A buyer reads the terms as “a 2-percent discount will be allowed if the invoice is paid within 10 days. Otherwise, the balance is due in 30 days.” Why should anyone pay quickly in order to take advantage of a mere 2-percent discount?

Assume that a business has been extended credit terms of 2/10 net 30 on a $1,000 janitorial supplies purchase. By deciding to take the discount, the company will pay $980 ($1,000 less 2%). By ignoring the discount, the full cost of $1,000 will be paid within the month.

The decision not to take the discount means the buyer is paying $20 to keep the money for an extra 20 days. Because there are slightly more than 18, 20-day periods in a year, the interest cost – on an annual basis – amounts to more than 36 percent. Obviously, this level of potential savings makes it a smart move to take the discount, even if money must be borrowed in order to do so. How then, can a garden pond business afford to offer customers a discount for prompt payment?

Discounts Cost as Well as Pay

It all boils down to the “cost” of those discounts. What does it cost a garden pond business to offer its customers a discount for cash or prompt payments? The answer can often be found in operation’s cash flow.

The principal disadvantage of offering discounts is the cost to the garden pond operation’s bottom-line profits arising from the loss of revenues. The cost of trade discounts must be weighed against the improved cash flow that can be expected. And, don’t overlook the impact on profits.

Obviously, the credit terms of your garden pond business should be designed to improve the operation’s cash flow. In its most basic form, cash flow is the movement of money in and out of the business.

In order to speed up the inflow of cash into their businesses, some retailers, distributors, manufacturers and contractors offer customers a trade discount off the original sales price if the customers pay within a specified period. The amount of the trade discount is typically one or two percent if the customers pay within 10 days. Full payment is normally due within 30 days if the customer doesn’t take advantage of the trade discount.

Pro and Con

Offering trade discounts has both advantages and disadvantages. For example:

ADVANTAGES: The main advantage to any garden pond professional who offers trade discounts is that it shortens the average collection period. Shortening that average collection period for accounts receivable is one of the biggest hurdles faced when attempting to accelerate the garden pond operation’s cash flow.

DISADVANTAGES: The primary disadvantage of offering trade discounts is the cost to the operation’s bottom-line profit that results from lost revenues.

Obviously, the cost of any trade discounts must be weighed against the improved cash flow expected. Another possible disadvantage is the increase in time necessary for billing and accounts receivable processing. In order to take full advantage of trade discounts, billing should take place as early as possible, which is generally the shipping date. For some small garden pond businesses, this may require additional clerical staff.
To Discount or Not to Discount?

Determining whether to offer or not to offer trade discounts requires the garden pond operation’s owner or manager to view the situation from two different perspectives: the bottom line perspective and the cash flow perspective. The option that strikes a balance between these two perspectives will help increase the garden pond operation’s cash flow – without sacrificing bottom line profits.

Consider the situation of SMITH’S BACKYARD WATER, a hypothetical business. Although the operation has been experiencing a steady build up in accounts receivable in recent months, slow collections have put a strain on the operation’s cash flow.

The operation’s owner is investigating the feasibility of changing the credit terms by offering a discount to its customers if their payments are received 10 days after shipment. The operation’s current credit terms call for full payment within 30 days of shipment.

If it is assumed that sales average about $25,000 per month; about 50 percent of the operation’s customers will take advantage of a one percent discount and an expected 75 percent will take advantage of a two percent discount and all customers not taking advantage of the discount are assumed to pay within 30 days. – See Chart.

Based on the figures of our hypothetical garden pond operation, offering no discount has the smallest impact on the bottom line, reducing the business’s profits by $2,750. Offering a two percent discount is the most costly, reducing the bottom line by $5,417.

From the cash flow perspective, a lower average investment in accounts receivable means a quicker inflow of cash. Offering the two percent discount significantly reduces the operation’s average investment in accounts receivable. This option would have the most favorable impact on cash flow problems.

Naturally, offering no discount is the most profitable but does nothing to increase cash flow. Offering a two percent discount would significantly increase the company’s cash flow but at the expense of its bottom line profit. Obviously, in this situation, a one percent discount reduces the operation’s bottom line by only $583, a small sacrifice for an increase in the operation’s cash flow. After all, this option increases cash flow by $8,334.

Profiting From Discounts

If a supplier offers payment terms extending beyond 30 days, it may be more advantageous to skip the trade discount and delay payment until the full amount is due. Generally, however, every garden pond professional should always take advantage of discounts of one percent or more when offered by suppliers requiring full payment within 30 days. Of course, in order to decide more precisely when to take a discount, the garden pond professional must compare that amount that would be earned by taking the discount to what it would cost to borrow money to make an early payment to a supplier.

Naturally, the amount of the discount and the time in which it is available can vary greatly. Usually, trade discounts are based on what is common for the supplier’s line of business. Some suppliers may offer a generous trade discount and some will offer none at all. Discounts, however, are usually negotiable.

One Step Further

Obviously, not every business owner or manager has enough clout with suppliers to negotiate better payment terms and discounts, but consider the potential rewards.

One business realized significant savings by negotiating standard payment terms from 30 to 45 days. Others have encouraged suppliers who didn’t normally offer discounts to give one in return for immediate payment – or by paying slower when they did not. In other words, the owners and managers of these businesses, in essence, created their own payment terms.

Why, then, are discounts so often overlooked or ignored by so many within the garden pond industry?

About the Author

Mark Battersby’s 25 years of professional experience in the fields of taxes and finances enable Mr. Battersby to write on unique and topical subjects. Although no reputable professional should ever render specific advice at arm’s length, he does craft unbiased, interesting, informative, and accurate articles. Mr. Battersby currently writes for publications in a variety of fields. His topical columns are syndicated in many publications each week. He also writes columns for trade magazines and has authored four books.

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Notes:
#1 Average accounts receivable is computed as a weighted average of the accounts receivable for the month.
#2 Cost of the trade discount is computed as follows: ((percent of customers taking discount x monthly sales) x discount percentage) x 12 months.
by John Olson
IPPCA President

The IPPCA is pleased to announce that the 7th Annual INFO TANZA, held in conjunction with the Irrigation Show at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, CA, Nov 5-8th, 2011, was by all accounts a smashing success. We call it smashing, as that is what occurred to all previous records of attendance for both the educational INFO TANZA seminars as well as the walk through attendance at the trade show portion of the event at the IPPCA Pond and Waterscape Pavilion on the main show floor. The Pond pavilion was the most heavily attended tradeshow display in the history of the Pond and Waterscape Industry’s history.

Represented at this year’s trade show, just to name a few, were such industry heavy hitters as: Firestone SP, Aquascape, Inc., Easy Pro Pond Products, Little Giant, Savio, Great Lakes Bio, Aqua Ultraviolet, Matala, Fielding Pumps, Rockin Foam, Kasco Marine, and Toba Fountains.

The 16 educational seminars were top of the line all the way through, featuring many internationally recognized pond industry experts.

The best way to describe these seminars and workshops is to quote attendee Cor Van Diepen of California in his thank you letter to the IPPCA Headquarters, in part:

Dear Dave and Gloria,

I didn’t think it could be done, but this past INFO TANZA in San Diego was the best ever. The caliber of the speakers including John Russell, Rick Bartel, and Demi Fortuna was excellent. I do believe I received a college education in pond building, closing the sale, and aquatic plants in one short weekend.

Also, seeing Greg Wittstock of Aquascape there, and being able to thank him personally for helping me get started in the grand adventure was a sweet moment.

Thanks for everything. I’m looking forward to next year.

Cor Van Diepen
Paradise Landscaping
Torrance, CA

The IPPCA’s awards banquet took place Nov. 6 at the House of Blues. Nine contractors received Top Gun Contractors Awards for participation in the Ponditat For Humanity build on Nov. 2-3: Mike White, Eric Triplett, Mike Garcia, Tim Rogers, Dave Jones, Mark Lawson, Max Taylor, Jacob Langsley and Rod Galasco. Max Taylor was presented the honor of the IPPCA 5 Star Contractor Award and POND Trade Magazine presented the Product of the Year Awards.

A special thanks to our many media sponsors as well: IGI Magazine, POND Trade Magazine and Water Garden News. Your support definitely contributed to the success of this event.

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(Note: in the November/December issue on page 26 is the press release for the IPPCA 5 Star Contractor Award. To see more about the Ponditat’ 2011 see the article in that issue on page 30.)
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**API® launches groundbreaking nitrifying bacteria QUICK START™**

Mars Fishcare, North America is excited to introduce QUICK START™ to the API® family of water treatments. QUICK START is a breakthrough in the aquatics industry; allowing for the safe and immediate introduction of fish to the aquarium by immediately starting the biological filter. Containing live nitrifying bacteria with a non-refrigerated shelf life of 2.5 years, the all natural QUICK START limits toxic ammonia and nitrate which helps prevent fish loss.

Commenting on QUICK START, Jeff Tyo, National Sales Director of Mars Fishcare said, “QUICK START is a game changer for the aquarium segment. It provides the aquarist with the most advanced live nitrifying bacterial product available in the trade with a stable, long shelf life product that is proven to work. QUICK START enables consumers to immediately add fish successfully to their aquarium without any delay! This product will reduce drop out rates and minimize fish loss while keeping consumers engaged with the hobby.” Beyond starting a new aquarium, QUICK START is recommended when adding fish, changing water, changing the filter media, after medicating or whenever ammonia or nitrite is detected.

Mars Fishcare, North America Inc.  
www.marsfishcare.com

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**Atlantic Water Gardens announces the publication of a new catalog for 2012**

Start the New Year with the 2012 catalog from Atlantic Water Gardens.

Featuring more than 350 items, Atlantic Water Gardens’ new 64-page, full-color catalog also includes many new products for both the professional installer and Do-It-Yourselfer such as Color Changing Colorfalls, TidalWave Mag Drive and Fountain Pumps, the expanded Oasis line of Pump Vaults, Fastfalls and Pond Kits, as well as our redesigned Eco-Blox.

To obtain a catalog or for more information, please call 877-80-PONDS or visit our website at www.atlanticwatergardens.com.

Atlantic Water Gardens  
www.atlanticwatergardens.com

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**Aquaponics Design and Technology Workshop in March 2012**

Aquatic Eco Systems, Inc. and Green Sky Growers Conducting Aquaponics Design and Technology Workshop in March 2012.

The next workshop, scheduled for March 28–31, 2012, will feature some of the most recognizable and respected names in the aquaponics industry, Dr. James Rakocy, Dr. Wilson Lennard and special guest Dr. Fred Petitt.

The success of their recent workshop has prompted Aquatic Eco Systems to schedule their next round of Aquaponics training. From March 28–31, 2012, Dr. James Rakocy and Dr. Wilson Lennard, two of the great minds in the Aquaponics industry, will join forces with the Aquatic Eco Systems staff and special guest speaker, Dr. Fred Petitt, Agricultural & Water Sciences Director for Walt Disney Parks & Resorts, to teach another three and a half day workshop with AES, located in the Orlando area. Because there will be multiple expert guest speakers, Aquatic Eco Systems plans to increase the size of the class to accommodate those who are interested.

Anyone interested in more information regarding the March 2012 Aquatic Eco Systems Aquaponics Workshop is urged to email, Ponics@AquaticEco.com.

Aquatic Eco Systems  
www.aquaticeco.com

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**Aquascaper Sets Date for PONDEMONIUM ® 2012**

August 23-26 – Aquascape, Inc. sets the date for its 12th anniversary of Ponderium®, the water garden industry’s premiere business and networking event. From August 23rd to 26th, distributors, contractors, and retailers can attend Aquascape’s training event designed to help grow their water feature businesses.

Held in St. Charles, Illinois, Ponderium® dovetails with the Independent Garden Center Show in Chicago, allowing participants the opportunity to attend both events. Planning is currently underway for 2012 Ponderium® activities and seminars.

“Our goal with Ponderium® is to offer cutting-edge construction and training events,” says Greg Wittstock, founder and CEO of Aquascape, Inc. “We also provide plenty of networking opportunities for contractors, retailers and distributors.” A favorite participant event is Saturday’s annual Blow-Out Bash dinner when awards are distributed to key customers.

Pond tours, hands-on construction training, new product showcases, business and marketing seminars, and networking events round out the menu of opportunities for Ponderium® attendees.

Ponderium® 2012 offers something for everyone, whether a veteran water gardener or someone just getting started with water features. To learn more about Ponderium®, log onto www.pondemonium.com.

For information about Aquascape, Inc. and its products and services, visit www.aquascapeinc.com or call 1-866-877-6637 (US) or 866-766-3426 (CAN).
Harmony Ponds Provided All Mechanical Work for Fountains at Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The inspiration for the dramatic fountains at the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C., came from the civil rights leader himself when he quoted, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." And when it came to making the water feature a reality, a joint venture selected by the National Park Service chose Fairfax, VA-based Harmony Ponds to do the fountain mechanical work. The memorial opened recently.

The memorial features two vertical walls, each with cascading water. It was Harmony’s job to make it all work -- installing pumps, filters, controls and pipes necessary to circulate more than 1,000 gallons of water through the system. The equipment includes temperature sensors to keep water flowing in cold weather and a special ultraviolet sterilization system to clean the water with minimal use of chemicals. Harmony hid all of the infrastructure underground in tunnels.

“We’re very honored to have been chosen to do the fountain mechanical work on this great memorial,” said Harmony Ponds President Al Short. “This whole system is designed to work flawlessly with minimal intervention for more than 100 years – a high standard set by the National Park Service. We’re confident that our team has met and exceeded that standard.”

For more information call 703-978-2800 or visit www.harmonyponds.com

Vianti Falls Kit Receives New Product Award

The new Vianti Falls Kit, from EasyPro Pond Products, was recently recognized by the International Irrigation Show by being awarded second place in the specialty category for Best New Product for 2011. The Vianti was the only water features product to receive an award in the contest this year, which was the first year the IPPCA (International Professional Pond Companies Association) has teamed up with the Irrigation Association Show.

The Vianti design, which features a trouble free stainless steel spillway, LED light strip, basin, pump and plumbing, was recognized for its ability to provide water conservation with its “no splash” design and lower power consumption with only 3.5 watts required for the 50,000 hours LED light strip, and a smaller pump requiring only 90 watts to operate, along with its ease of installation.

The Vianti has also been selected as the product of choice by many of the leading national manufacturers of hardscape outdoor living products.

For more information visit easypropondproducts.com

Gold Crest Distributing names Cody Melton Manager of I.T. Operations

Gold Crest Distributing, the nation’s largest distributor of backyard nature products, gifts and pet products has named Cody Melton as its new manager of I.T. Operations. In making the announcement, Gold Crest President Mel Toellner remarked, “I’m extremely excited that Cody has joined our team full time in this extremely important position. With over 50% of our orders now coming from customers via the Internet, it’s extremely important that we have second to none customer friendly platforms for our customers to utilize.” Toellner concludes, “What’s different about Cody is that he has technical skills and the ability to communicate solutions to others while always emphasizing customer service above all else!”

Cody has worked for Gold Crest part-time over 7 years. He started in High School as an invoicer and had assisted in various I.T. roles within the company during the past 7 years. Toellner commented, “We will look to Cody to assess and direct all aspects of the technical needs for Gold Crest.”

Before joining Gold Crest, Melton worked for Hy-Vee as a Retail Technology Intern. At Hy-Vee Melton specialized in network installations and upgrades. Melton recently finished his MBA with an emphasis in Information Technology Management from Northwest State University where he had completed a B.S. in Management Information Systems in 2010.

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New 5 Year Limited Warranty Coverage from Danner Mfg.

Announcing Danner Mfg, Inc.’s new 5 year limited warranty coverage on Pondmaster, Supreme Classic and Supreme Hydroponics Fractionator Pumps.

Danner Mfg, Inc., located in Islandia, NY has been developing innovative water gardening and aquarium products for both hobbyists and professionals alike for over 75 years strong. Danner Mfg’s limited warranty previously covered Pondmaster, Supreme Classic and Supreme Hydroponics Fractionator pumps up to 3 years from the date of purchase. Danner Mfg is proud to introduce, on these same pumps, their new 5 year limited warranty effective as of January 1st 2011. The new 5 year warranty will repair or replace any pump to be found defective with the pump body, cover, filter and accessories from the original date of purchase. The consumer must obtain and submit a copy of their bill of sale to take advantage of Danner’s extended warranty coverage of 5 years.

For complete details on warranty coverage please contact your local rep. Call Danner Mfg direct or visit their website www.dannermfg.com and click the warranty tab located on their homepage.
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