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pondside p.44

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FEATURES

8 Beyond the Build POND CONSTRUCTION

Fitz's Fish Ponds of Bound Brook, New Jersey, was thrilled to construct a dazzling new water feature as the centerpiece for Storr Tractor Company's headquarters. But as **Mike Hall** and **Ryan Cardillo** explain, the most valuable component of the build wasn't necessarily the spectacular, customized mosaic bridge engraved with the customer's logo — instead, it was the enrichment of their ongoing personal relationship with the company's owner.

14 Call in the Hawks

Mosquitoes aren't just a seasonal annoyance anymore. In fact, they are making headlines around the country. **Jamie Beyer** dispels the myth that having a pond or water feature is an open invitation for the dangerous pests, and he offers multiple strategies for keeping them out of your sanctuary. Turn to pg. 14 and meet the mosquito hawk — perhaps your soon-to-be new best friend.

20 Top of the Tube

Eric Triplett, or The Pond Digger, has become a household name in our industry thanks in large part to his growing presence on social media. Meet his longtime friend and videographer who first convinced him to shoot video, and hear how they scaled the charts of YouTube together, as told to contributor **Allison Engel**.



20

28 Cash in, Cash out

Whether it's written in a spiral notebook or loaded in your accounting software, if you're a business owner, you have a chart of accounts to keep track of your income and expenses. However, just because you're in the black overall doesn't necessarily mean all your jobs are making money. **Steve Shinholser** discusses the benefits of classification accounting and his management philosophies to make sure you're making money — and having fun.

36 Jerry's Troubleshooting Tips

Maybe it has happened to you. After a long day, you fix yourself a cold beverage and kick back by the pond for some much-needed tranquility and peace of mind. Before you can prop up your feet, you notice an alarmingly low water level. Don't fret! Keep calm, and turn to pg. 36, where **Jerry Romano** gets into the nitty-gritty of diagnosing and repairing water loss and leaks that are far beyond the painfully obvious.

44 Falling for Color COVER STORY

Winter is coming! It's time to prune the pond plants in preparation for cooler temperatures, but that doesn't mean you have to sacrifice the visual beauty of your pondscape. Instead, follow **Larry Carnes'** lead and consider adding some fall-friendly plants around the pond. Plant with all seasons in mind and create an environment that fosters transitional color, unity and balance all year long.

52 Shine on with Hikari Muji LANGUAGE OF KOI

Coins aren't the only things you might find shimmering below the water's surface. In the first installment of a three-part series about the iridescent, lustrous Hikari variety of koi, **Ellen Kloubec** details the single-colored Muji type. While Hikari Muji lack intricate patterns, their solid colors actually accent their shiny qualities, bringing a whole new meaning to the nickname "living jewels." Learn some identification tips, and you'll see why Hikari Muji are some of the best-selling koi on the market.

56 Streaming Live

If only building streams were as easy as watching Netflix streams. Either way, you can still sit back, relax and be entertained for hours. But only one type of stream offers endless beauty, tranquility and babbling that doesn't get old. **Shane Stefek** shares his tips and expertise on building the stream of your dreams — no subscription or Wi-Fi required.

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COLUMNS

- 7 Publisher's Perspective

SERIES: Best Pond Practices

Kent Wallace is on hiatus this issue but will return in the November/December issue.



Upcoming Events

2016

September 24-25
38th Annual Koi Show
Central California Koi Society
Fig Garden Village
Fresno, California
www.cencalkoi.com

October 19 - 12
Hardscapes and GIE+EXPO
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.hardscapena.com
www.gie-expo.com

October 25 - 28
IWGS Symposium
Hotel El Castellano Gamma de Fiesta Inn
Mérida, Mexico
www.iwgs.org

November 2 - 4
International Pool | Spa | Patio Expo
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.poolspapatio.com

December 5 - 9
Irrigation Show & Education Conference
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, Nevada
www.irrigation.org/irrigationshow

Are you attending an event that you think others should know about? Are you hosting an event and want more people to come? Send event info to pr@pondtrademag.com.

2017

January 10 - 12
Landscape Ontario
Toronto Congress Centre
Toronto, Ontario
www.locongress.com

January 11 - 13
MANTS
Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, Maryland
www.mants.com

February 22 - 24
Water Garden Expo
Heart of Oklahoma Expo Center
Shawnee, Oklahoma
www.wgexpo.com

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Publisher's Perspective

Calling all Water Artisans!

When I'm not reviewing articles and photos for upcoming issues, you might find me embarking on various pond tours and visits, attending water gardening trade shows



around the country, or perhaps just perusing through all of your posts on Facebook. Regardless of where I am or what I'm doing, the immense talent out there among you continues to blow my mind.

That said, we've hatched a plan for a first annual "Water Artisans of the Year" contest. Hopefully, this fall's friendly competition will be the first of many yearly contests to celebrate and showcase your expertise.

But in order to make this work, we need your help! Take a gander at our ad on pg. 12 for the full details. We're looking for the most impressive builds completed by professional contractors since November of last year. All we need from you are four photos, a short description and a \$25 charitable donation per entry. This year, we've chosen the Wounded Warrior Project as the recipient of all proceeds. (If you're unfamiliar, check out their tremendous work at www.woundedwarriorproject.org.) I'll collect all the applications and present them to a well-rounded panel of judges from around the industry. Then, they'll vote on winners and honorable mentions in five different categories. The judging process will be anonymous, so try not to identify yourself or any brand-name products in the pictures or write-up. Winners will receive an award and a special review in our March/April 2017 issue.

So, let's get going! You can enter as many projects as you want. Start picking out your best work from the past year, and let's support a great cause — while having some fun together in the process!

On to more "pressing" topics, like the hot-off-the-press issue you're holding in your hands right now. You probably noticed that we spiffed up the magazine by going to a heavier paper stock. We did this for a few different reasons, but mainly, we wanted to ensure that you, our reader, receives a publication of the highest quality possible. We also feel it's important that the quality endures from the printing press to your coffee table — or wherever you might enjoy POND Trade — and maintains this quality for many years to come. Welcome to a new era!

Enjoy the new look, but make sure you don't stay glued to the cover for too long. We've got some great stuff in the pages that follow. From troubleshooting pond leaks to controlling mosquito problems to exploring the joys of two types of "streaming" — in the backyard and on the web — we've got you covered.

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Beyond the Build

Contractors bridge features and friendships

by Mike Hall and Ryan Cardillo,
Fitz's Fish Ponds

Over the years, repeat customers — those with whom we've built a lasting relationship based on our shared passion for ponds and water features — have become one of our main sources of business. One shining example of

a repeat customer is our good friend and customer, Mary Lou. We met Mary Lou a few years ago when Brian Fitzsimmons, the owner of Fitz's Fish Ponds, offered to deliver some koi she had purchased from our old retail store.

Mary Lou had trouble getting around unassisted and often used a wheelchair if she had to walk more than a few steps. Enjoying her pond was one of her favor-

ite things to do, but she was starting to have some trouble maintaining it. We offered to begin servicing her pond on a regular basis, and the relationship grew from there.

The Storr-y Begins

We embarked on our first construction project with Mary Lou when we learned — quite surprisingly — that she was the owner of Storr Tractor Company, a multi-million-dollar landscape supply company. We knew Mary Lou spent a lot of time there, so we thought we would present her with a unique project for her company's headquarters, integrating her love of water features and the company's focus on the water feature business.

To begin, Mike Hall, our construction manager and designer, visited the Storr

Tractor site to hold a design meeting, ask a series of design-related questions and schedule a site visit. Just as he does with all his jobs, he took a look at all the factors that could potentially affect the build and final project, including sun exposure, water sources, microclimates, animal traffic, people traffic and drainage issues.

Avoiding a Traffic Jam

With this particular site, we had to deal with a full sun, southern exposure and an issue with pedestrian traffic. The build site separated an upper parking lot with a lower parking lot. Customers could see the entrance to the building, but in order to reach it, they would have to walk all the way around the construction site, which previously was an old garden bed with a small,

Building the pebble mosaic bridge (left) was a time-intensive job. By varying the stone color and direction, we created a wavy, spiral pattern — essentially organized chaos. As the last Sonotubes were being installed (middle), we started filling the others with concrete. Two of our workers dug out the stream beds and trenches to prep for plumbing. When working with a full crew in such a small area, organization is key. Mike and Kevin (right) painstakingly set pebbles one by one. Before the job began, we spent about 40 hours carefully sorting bags of pebbles. Only the long, skinny pebbles would set in the concrete properly, so everything else had to be discarded ahead of time.

pondless stream. Storr Tractor was a business with high foot traffic, so this was our biggest concern.

The solution we came up with involved a sidewalk with a set of bridges meandering down to the lower parking lot with a one-of-a-kind, pebble mosaic bridge. The entire pathway would be heated with embedded cables to keep it free of



Pitcher plants and horsetail (above) were planted in the peat bog to add some life and color. A large piece of driftwood was also added for decoration. The nearly completed pathway (left) included blue stone tractor treads. We left an empty space between the treads to carve the Storr Tractor Company logo.

ice in the winter and prevent damage from snow removal. This would allow customers and employees to cut through the parking lot safely and still enjoy the water feature. The

equipment, including commercial tractors. In order to tie in the theme of the business with the water feature, a series of custom, carved, blue stone tractor-tire treads would be set

In order to tie in the theme of the business with the water feature, a series of custom, carved, blue stone tractor-tire treads would be set in the sidewalk cement.

pebble mosaic bridge would make the pathway the centerpiece of the water feature rather than a boring cement pathway cutting through the middle of the site.

A Customized Centerpiece

As mentioned previously, Storr Tractor sells landscape

in the sidewalk cement. We also planned to carve the company's logo into the pathway and stain it green to further customize the feature for the Storr Tractor Company.

We suggested planting a peat bog and carnivorous pitcher plants at the start of the site. There was just enough shade on the north side under an existing

birch tree to grow the peat. The stream split at that point and went toward the outside of the site on both sides. After traveling down several spillways and turns, the two streams met again at the bottom and disappeared under the rocks. The heated cement sidewalk would go down the middle and cross the stream twice with cement bridges, the pebble mosaic

more inches were poured, and the tractor tire treads were set in the entire sidewalk, with the exception of the mosaic bridge. The mosaic bridge was set in dry mortar. All the pebbles were set on their edges, with two-thirds in the dry mortar and one-third exposed. We spent around 40 hours sorting pebbles for the correct profiles.

For the water feature, we were looking for more of a fantasy-land design than a natural look. We stacked hand-sorted, flat, river stone between moss boulders.

bridge being the lower of the two. Several bubbling rocks would be placed in the stream with one unique rock placed as a spillway. Retaining walls would add height and create planting areas.

After drawing up the design and holding a final meeting with Mary Lou, we were given the go-ahead to start. We could tell that Mary Lou was just as excited as we were to see this idea come to life, and we certainly did not want to disappoint her.

A Bridge to Everywhere

The construction started with the demolition of the existing pondless stream and the removal of all the vegetation, with the exception of a multi-stemmed paper birch. Next, we sprayed and marked everything. The sidewalk and bridges went in first. The code in New Jersey requires a depth of 36 inches for footings, so we used four 36-inch-deep Sonotubes for each bridge.

The concrete for the bridges and rest of the sidewalk had to be set in layers. First, we created the forms and poured a 4-inch base. Next, all the heating elements and sensors were installed. After that, two

After the mosaic was set, which took two days, a final layer of dried mortar was applied and brushed down to the finished profile. We used a backpack sprayer with water to mist and soak all the mortar without any pooling. The piece was covered and misted again for a month's time to avoid any cracking. This was one of the biggest pebble mosaics we had ever created, and the result was a unique and beautiful centerpiece for the feature.

Rockin' the Stream

For the water feature, we were looking for more of a fantasy-land design than a natural look. We stacked hand-sorted, flat, river stone between moss boulders. Core-drilled, bubbling moss boulders were also placed throughout the stream bed. One moss boulder had a natural hole that just was begging us to flow water through it, so that was also incorporated. An underground basin at the bottom of the falls collected water that would be recycled to the top. Some dry-stacked, flat walls were used to create plant beds, and the whole project was planted with both aquatic and terrestrial plants.



The pebble mosaic bridge (top) turned out great. Red stone was cut into circles to add some color and variety to the design. By swirling the stone around the red circles, it created an optical illusion like comets streaking through the sky or tadpoles swimming through a pond. Muriatic acid was used to clean up excess concrete (bottom) around the tractor treads and the mosaic bridge. The treads needed to be set flush with the concrete, which was difficult to do neatly.

PONDTRADE™

Water Artisans of the Year contest



- Best overall design
- Best waterfall
- Best pondless
- Most naturalistic design
- Best renovation

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Go to <http://bit.ly/2016artisan> for official rules and entry form.

Contest deadline is November 1, 2016.

Here's an overview of the finished product. This job especially tested everyone's skills and knowledge, combining many different aspects into one unique water feature.



© Croy Scott Photography

The entire build took approximately a month to complete, and Mary Lou was thrilled with the result. She now could enjoy the serenity of a water feature both at home and at work. Thanks to the success of this project, she hired us to do a complete makeover in her backyard, including a 18,000-gallon koi pond! That's a story for another day, however.

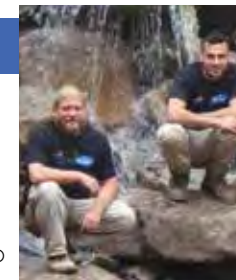
We learned from this experience that customer relationships are extremely important, and maintaining those relationships over the years is beneficial to all parties involved. I'm sure you'll agree with us when we say we wish everyone loved water features as much as Mary Lou does! ☘

About the Authors

Since **Mike Hall** was a small boy, he has been exposed to the plant and animal kingdom through his uncle, Denis Hall, who was the curator at the Staten Island Zoo.

Mike bred and raised aquarium fish and invertebrates from the time he was in junior high school until his mid-20s. He then switched his focus to scorpions, snakes and tarantulas. He started working with Fitz's Fish Ponds in Bound Brook, New Jersey, three years ago, where he is able to utilize all the skills he has acquired over the years.

Ryan Cardillo is the retail manager of Fitz's Fish Ponds. He has been working for the company for four years, with the majority of that time spent building and servicing water features. Ryan took over the management of the retail store when it moved to its new location in October 2014.



This is our favorite spillway in the feature. We found a large moss rock with a natural hole through it — perfect to run water through. We ran a pipe through the back and used waterfall foam to seal most of the gaps. This was not a part of the original design, but we were thrilled that it ended up being built as a central part of the feature.



Call in the HAWKS

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at bay with
winged friends

Photos by
Greg Courtney,
Carl Kurtz,
Nathan Brockman
and Jamie Beyer



| Mosquito Control |

by **Jamie Beyer,**
Midwest Waterscape

Many people think that installing a water garden or water feature will create a mosquito problem for the nearby landscape. However, I like to talk about the fact that if water is managed correctly, the landscape will actually have fewer of these bugs and other small, flying insects than landscapes without water. Water can attract many kinds of predators that view mosquitoes as one of their main-course meals. One that is very interesting and beautiful is the mosquito hawk, or as more people may know them, dragonflies and damselflies.

Dragonflies and damselflies are both part of the order of Odonata. The main difference between the two is that dragonflies hold their wings out horizontally, while the damselflies hold their wings above their back. Damselflies are generally a much smaller species. The entomologists have grouped these insects into interesting groups like clubtails, darners and cruisers, just to name a few. They are beautiful insects that can hover and dart about, freely at will.

The key message is that correctly managed water will result in a well-controlled mosquito population. Mosquito control strategies can commence at the larval or adult stages.

Larvae Control Strategies

One larval management method is aeration. If the water is pumped, or aerated, mosquito larvae cannot survive. The larvae need to connect to the surface of the water in order to breathe. Pumping the water breaks the surface tension, and the larvae cannot maintain a connection. So your water pump is not only aerating the water, but it is also limiting mosquito reproduction.

Another management tool in controlling mosquitoes involves adding fish to the water garden or container. Fish consider the larvae a delicacy and will search for them relentlessly, devouring all of them.

An ebony jewelwing damselfly (top) is caught in the act of eating a mosquito. A dragonfly naiad, or nymph (middle), spends its entire larval stage in the water, so if mosquito larvae are present, the naiad will eat them. A dragonfly adult (bottom) emerges from its larval stage, leaving its exoskeleton behind.

If adding fish is not an option and the water is not pumped, adding *Bacillus thuringiensis* serotype israelensis (Bti) in the form of brand names such as Mosquito Bits

product on the surface of the water in order to be effective. Any one of these techniques will kill 100 percent of the mosquito larvae, but not neces-



or Mosquito Dunks is easy and effective. Bti produces toxins that kill various species of mosquitoes, fungus gnats and blackflies, while having almost no other adverse effect on other organisms. Simply float the Bti

sarily the adult mosquitoes that are naturally attracted to water for laying their eggs. Even though the larvae cannot survive, the adults that stick around can easily become a potential problem.

Adult Control Strategies

Enter the mosquito hawk, or dragonfly. Like mosquitoes, mosquito hawks are also naturally attracted to the water to lay their eggs. While there, they survive on meals of mosquitoes and other pesky, small, flying insects. The flying adults can catch them in their legs, which dangle downward like a net. Even more interesting, the dragonflies lay their eggs in the water, so once they hatch, the dragonfly nymphs may also eat any mosquito larvae still present on the surface of the water.

There are other mosquito predators that are about as interesting as dragonflies — birds, like purple martins and barn swallows, bats, frogs and toads, just to name a few.

Create the Ideal Habitat

Simple things attract mosquito hawks, such as some marginal plants. Each species has different egg-laying strategies that may require a certain type of plant stem to lay their eggs. Some will lay eggs closer to the

This blue dasher dragonfly rests on a native waterlily called *Nuphar japonica*, or spatterdock.



water surface — if not directly in the water, on the stem. Some will even lay their eggs on waterlily leaves or lotus stems. Others may like wood that submerges into the water for laying their eggs.

Skimmer boxes and pump intakes end up killing a lot of dragonfly nymphs by sucking them in. Providing different mechanical filters before the pump intake may allow more dragonflies to survive.

Fish are a natural predator of the dragonfly nymphs. The larger the fish, the larger the nymphs they can eat. All fish will eat the small, newly-hatched nymphs. This simply is unavoidable if you have fish, so providing a variety of habitats is always the best solution, giving the nymphs more places to hide.

A category of pond called wildlife ponds will promote and provide the greatest variety of habitats for the greatest number of wildlife species, including dragonflies. These ponds usually have a sloping edge and lots of driftwood going into the water. The pond may also have a sand or mud beach. Certain dragonflies seek out this type of habitat.

There are some species of Odonates that live for five to seven years in the nymph stage, while others' life cycles will complete in a single season. Those that survive over the winter can do so in either the nymph or egg stage on the stems of plants, on wood, or in muck, depending on the species. Cleaning the

The flame skimmer dragonfly (top, right) can be an effective predator of mosquito larvae (bottom, right). The larvae need still pools of water to survive. Remember, if the water is pumped, the larvae cannot survive.



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muck or sediment out of a pond could end up killing a lot of dragonfly and damselfly larvae.

Welcome the Frenzy

An interesting habit of some species of adult dragonflies is their ability to swarm. Literally, tens of thousands can hover above the ground eating small, flying insects — including mosquitoes. Usually in the late afternoon, there might be a dragonfly in every square meter of air above a prairie, for example. Think of it as a feeding frenzy of sharks.

So, as I often like to say to people, if you have well-managed water in your landscape, you will have fewer mosquitoes than dry or poorly managed landscapes. The dragonflies will take care of many of those



A 12-foot-long Lego model of a dragonfly (above, left) hovers over a pond at Reiman Gardens in Ames, Iowa. These two ebony jewelwing damselflies (above, right) are coupled together for mating. The female has the white spot at the tip of its wings, and the male is more brightly colored. Notice that the damselflies' wings are held above their bodies, whereas dragonflies hold their wings out horizontally.

that dare to show up!

Now, when you hear people express the perceived notion that mosquitoes will be a huge problem in any water environment, you can explain why this does not have to be the case. While there are many different reasons, one of the most interesting and beautiful is the mosquito hawk. They are a welcome addition to anyone's landscape. ☞

About the Author

Water gardening has been a passion of **Jamie Beyer's** for more than 50 years, and he has worked on more than 1,000 ponds. He owns several very large ponds with many different kinds of water plants and fish. Jamie has a master's degree in Fish and Wildlife Biology and is a Lifetime Master Gardener. He is the founder and former president of the Central Iowa Water Garden Association. He has a broad background in fisheries, the dynamics of water, horticulture and aquatic and wildlife ecology.

He currently owns Midwest Waterscapes, a consulting and installation business, where he specializes in water gardens, fountains and ponds.



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Longtime friends, Eric Triplett and Dietmar Quistorf, take their YouTube tutorials very seriously — and their more than 60,000 subscribers love them for it.

Top of the Tube

How two pond enthusiasts thrive with online video

by Allison Engel,
POND Trade Contributor

Before Eric Triplett, 48, founded The Pond Digger, a California-based, water feature construction company, he got his start in an aquarium store. One day, an eccentric customer who had recently immigrated from Germany came into the store looking for saltwater fish. It was a fateful meeting, as it turned out that the customer, Dietmar Quistorf, now 53, was a self-taught, expert cinematographer and social-media wizard who had been an early adopter of all things internet-related. A friendship was born, and since then, Quistorf has helped to elevate Triplett's pond business into websites, videos and social media. Today, The Pond Digger's YouTube videos attract 1.5 million new views per month, and 60,000 pond enthusiasts subscribe to The Pond Digger Channel. Here's how these two pond enthusiasts, working in their spare time, made smart moves to land at the top of their category on YouTube.

What made you create an online presence?

Eric: Dietmar made me do it. I fought him tooth and nail, because I did not understand the internet at the time. Remember, this was nearly 20 years ago, and the internet was just becoming mainstream. Dietmar hassled me until I finally said yes — just to shut him up! I didn't think anything would come of it, and I honestly hoped he would leave me alone.

Dietmar: It was at the beginning of the internet, and it was still the wild, wild, crazy west. I built Eric a website that was top of the line at the time, with Flash art and 360 photos — stuff they don't even use anymore. We also started selling pond kits, just like I said we would.

Eric: Fast-forward to the advent of YouTube, and Dietmar said, "We have to shoot videos." I didn't even know what YouTube was at the time. The first video Dietmar shot in May 2008 was a series of four 10-minute videos called "Ponds Gone Wrong." We were trying to make the public aware of the importance of choosing the right pond contractor. At first, the response was kind of slow, because we were the first in our industry to bring tutorial videos to life. Other videos on YouTube at the time were mostly along the lines of, "Hey, buy my product!" We weren't selling product; we were teaching people how to do things right the first time — and they began to love us for it.

What has been your most successful video?

Eric: Our most successful video, hands down, is about a \$60,000 koi fish. In collaboration with our good friend, Shawn McHenry of Mystic Koi in Upland, California, it shows viewers the attributes of a huge, show-quality Sanke koi imported from Japan. Shawn's resume includes judging the top koi show in Japan, as well as koi shows in the Philippines, England and across the United States. He knows quality koi. His unique teaching style combined perfectly with

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mine, creating a fun learning experience that left viewers wanting more.

Dietmar: And now, believe it or not, the video has nearly 3.5 million views.

To put out the high-quality video Dietmar is capable of doing, even for a single, 10-minute video, it takes an hour to get lights and cameras loaded, three hours on location for filming, and an hour to put the equipment away once we finally get home.

Eric: It has also been shared by several koi clubs and blogs, including some in Japan. People want to see what a \$60,000 fish looks like, so they can look for one of their own!

You both have full-time jobs. Eric runs the pond construction business, and Dietmar works as a videographer at the University of Southern California. How do you fit in these video shoots?

Dietmar: One problem is that we don't have the luxury of saying we only shoot in the morning or late afternoon, when the light is best. Sometimes we just have to get the project done, and that means shooting all day and into the night, after the sun goes down. We have learned to adapt to all kinds of lighting conditions. We have overhangs to create shade and huge, white, silk sails like you see in Hollywood — known in the industry as butterfly overheads — that help filter the harsh rays of the sun. We constantly adjust them as the sun moves.

Eric: When we are really cranking, we put out videos immediately after we finish the production. We film one weekend, Dietmar edits during the week, and then we release one or two videos the following Saturday. Then, we go out and film more on Sunday. Imagine doing this constantly, week after week. Dietmar would be grinding on the editing, and then I'd come over to his house to write the descriptions for the search engines so our audience could easily find the videos. To put out the high-quality video Dietmar is capable of doing, even for a single, 10-minute video, it takes an hour to get lights and cameras loaded, three hours on location for filming, and an hour to put the equipment away once we finally get home. And then Dietmar starts on the computer, editing all over again.

Dietmar: All this is between regular work. It's never-ending.

Eric: Dietmar's getting up and driving three hours every day to USC, and I'm waking up at 4:30 every morning to run my crews. When there's a holiday, we are grinding early



Triplett (top) even rocks makeup on the set! The "How To Build A Fish Pond" series (bottom) was the first time they started using multiple lenses during a video production.

so we can spend the evening enjoying some family time. While everyone else is sleeping in, we are running full-speed. I don't mean to sound like a cliché, but this is hard work! If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

Dietmar: There were some times we put out videos every day for 20 days straight.

Sounds like a recipe for burnout.

Eric: It is! We took almost two years off in the middle of our venture, from 2011 to 2013. At the time, we were pretty dominant on YouTube. Then, streaming video started exploding, and everybody was making videos. Other pond guys were finally understanding the extent of YouTube's reach. Now we had competition, and Dietmar is highly competitive. He wants to be the best and do the best-quality work. One day he said, "Eric, we can't let these pond guys catch up to us." There was one YouTube channel in our category that was bigger than we were. Dietmar would not rest until we surpassed it. I'm competitive, too, so we started filming again, and we were relentless.

Dietmar: We are the now the No. 1 pond channel on YouTube. We have more than 23 million views, and 1.5 million per month in our peak season. About 50 percent of our viewers are international, and Eric has actually helped do-it-yourself enthusiasts install Helix pond equipment in Africa, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Thailand.

Eric: The Helix System build in Africa was the most elaborate pond, with multiple

skimmers, filters, jets and external pumps. It was complicated, but through the magic of YouTube and Skype, we were able to help guide our client through the installation process, and he did an excellent job.

How do you two, basically working out of a garage, compete against multi-million-dollar pond supply companies?

We are now the No. 1 channel on YouTube in the world. We have more than 23 million views, and 1.5 million per month in season.

Eric: Search engine optimization (SEO) keeps us on top. Dietmar was doing it before Google even knew what it was! If you type anything pond-related into Google, one of our videos will pop up. Whether it's pond construction, koi fish or water features, you'll see us on the first page.

Dietmar: I got into web development, programming, the internet and SEO back in 1997. I knew it from the beginning and from the ground up, even back when black-hat hacking was legal. Most SEO companies are all about accumulating views — quantity over quality. Quantity gets you a lot of views, but people come and go, never to be seen again. Optimization is about quality viewers — people who are interested in what you are teaching or selling. Those viewers will

stay on your site longer, share it and interact with it. That's when the magic happens, and your reach spirals outward. One reason other companies have fewer viewers is because there's so much work involved in it. Knowing how to film — the technical aspect of it — takes a lot of training. Understanding how to tell a story so that viewers want to see the end of the video and don't prematurely click away is critical. SEO changes constantly.

You must research on a daily basis to find the best lead words to represent your videos so that potential viewers can find you.

Eric: And then once the video is up, you have to share it on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest and other relevant social media platforms. That's my job. We also always answer all comments on YouTube. It's important for us to communicate with our audience, but it has become harder, because we get so many comments and questions. It used to take me 10 minutes a week to answer comments, and now it takes hours. That's what led us to produce our "Ask the Pond Digger" series. Many of the questions are redundant, so instead of answering the same questions multiple times, I can suggest one of our five-minute YouTube videos for all the answers they need.

What has your collaboration meant to The Pond Digger's online success?

Eric: The Pond Digger's online success started because Dietmar had



On the set of the "Ask The Pond Digger" show, Quistorf produces quick, yet powerful videos.

some crazy dreams. Dietmar is a self-taught genius. When I first met him, he was cleaning pools and dreaming of building websites during the mindless skimming and brushing of pool cleaning. One day, he came to me and said, "I'm gonna build websites." I replied, "You build websites?" He said, "Not yet, but I'm gonna." Soon afterward, he did it — he actually built me a website. Then the conversation changed. "Eric, now I'm gonna take pictures of your work," he said. "You take pictures?" I asked. "Not yet, but I'm gonna." And

that's how it's been the whole time. "Eric, we shoot video now," he once told me. "But you don't even have a camera," I said. "Then I'll buy one!" he declared. In filming the videos, I'm just the on-air talent. Dietmar does everything else.

Dietmar: That's right. I even call him "the talent." I'm the producer, director, sound guy, lighting guy, shooter, editor and colorist. We don't want any copyright infringement, so the music we play is music that I have composed. I do it all on the computer with my friend in Germany, Christoph Kolodziej.





Quistorf goes to great lengths to establish the best angles for filming. It's an art not recognized by all videographers.

What video equipment do you use?

Eric: In the beginning, our camera was just a little, handheld Canon. Today, we use professional equipment like you find in Hollywood.

Dietmar: I use a big Canon camera now with a positive-lock lens mount, which is what is standard in Hollywood. The lenses are handmade and cost \$10,000 each. We were shooting in high definition before YouTube even offered it.

I've got lighting, overheads and a boom mic. I have about \$40,000 just in the camera and two lenses. So I have nearly \$70,000 in it by the time you add it all together.

What have you learned doing the shoots?

Eric: I understand production better now after having worked together so long. Plus, I know how to break down the steps in pond

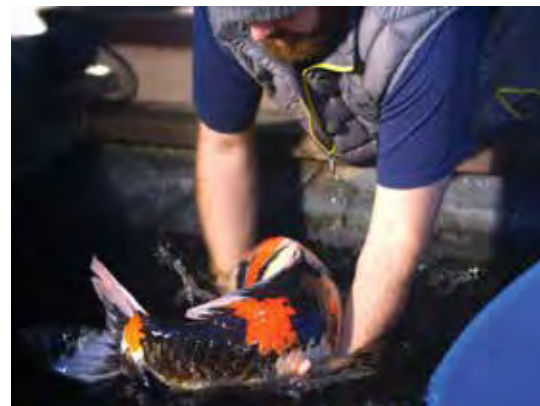
construction that we are teaching in each video. Sometimes if I skip a step or say something that Dietmar doesn't get, he says, "Cut! Cut! Eric, cut! If I don't understand, how will our viewers understand?"

Dietmar: It's not easy to evaluate yourself when you're in front of the camera, because you have to focus on other things. But when you are behind the camera, you can see what works and what doesn't, so I can help guide him while he teaches.

Eric: I've got to tell you, the more he's learned about video production, the harder it becomes to please him, the longer things take, the more he yells at me and, ultimately, the better the videos get. People are just starving for quality, do-it-yourself instructional videos. They just want more!

Dietmar: If you do a thing, do it right, or don't do it at all. But people do yell at us online. They always want to know when the next video is on

its way. During one series called "How to Build a Koi Pond," some viewers got really upset, because if it was too long between video releases, they felt like we were leaving them with a cliffhanger until the next video came out. Some of our fans would call



As predicted by Quistorf, the tutorial collaboration with koi expert Shawn McHenry was a pivotal move for The Pond Digger YouTube channel.

the office, send an email inquiry through the website, text Eric's cellphone or leave comments on YouTube, begging for the next installment!

Can you make a living off YouTube?

Dietmar: To live off YouTube, you need to get a million views a day. Advertising pays so little on it. And ponds are a niche market, so we're not there yet, but we are headed in the right direction.

Eric: Currently we're earning enough to support Dietmar's film equipment fetish, but my goal is for him to earn a living off it.

What's in the future for you two?

Dietmar: We are trying to keep to a schedule of doing one video a week.

Eric: There's a placard that YouTube gives out for having 100,000 subscribers to your channel. I would love to get that placard for Dietmar. We're more than halfway there.

Dietmar: Even though we've made 323 videos, I feel like we're just getting started. We have so much more to teach.

Eric: Stay tuned, and be sure to subscribe to The Pond Digger YouTube channel. We really are just getting started! ☘

About the Author



Allison Engel has been a newspaper reporter and op-ed writer for the Des Moines Register and Tribune, the San Jose Mercury News and the Pacific News Service, covering everything from agriculture to the funeral industry.

She and her twin sister, Margaret Engel, wrote three editions of "Food Finds: America's Best Local Foods and the People Who Produce Them" for HarperCollins and turned it into a show that ran for seven years on the Food Network. The first play they wrote, "Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins," has been produced around the country continually since Kathleen Turner originated the role in 2010.

She is currently an arts writer at the University of Southern California, where she also helps direct the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities.

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Cash in, Cash out

Track business expenses with classification software

by Steve Shinholser,
Premier Ponds

If you are reading this article, there's a good chance that you are in the water feature business. Therefore, you understand that what we do is fun and changes people's lives. I started Premier Ponds the day after the planes crashed into the World Trade Center 15 years ago with the following mantra: "Have fun, change lives and make money."

It's the making-money part of the business that is the hardest aspect to master for most of us. There's only one way to consistently know whether you're making money or not — by tracking your numbers. Whether it's in QuickBooks (my choice) or another accounting software, you must keep track of the money.

I think of money in terms of either it's coming in, or it's going out. Every time someone gives me money, I tell QuickBooks who gave it to me and why. Each time I spend money, I tell QuickBooks why I spent it and on whom.

Keep It Classy

Most accounting software comes loaded with its own chart of accounts. These are fine, but it's a bit generic. In QuickBooks, in

addition to the chart of accounts, I track everything in classes. There is a "class" feature you can turn on and customize for your business. It's easy and allows you to create the specific classes that are important to your business.

Some classes I use include spring cleanings, new construction, renovations, service, fall maintenance, mid-season maintenance, winter

any of my business segments, or classes. By looking at each class and adding everything up, I can set my financial goals for the next year. I know after each season how progress is going. Are we on target?

Be Disciplined

I've met too many contractors who simply throw all their job receipts into a shoebox — job after

Classes

I think of money in terms of either it's coming in, or it's going out. Every time someone gives me money, I tell QuickBooks who gave it to me and why. Each time I spend money, I tell QuickBooks why I spent it and on whom.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • Spring Cleanings | • Winter Drive-by |
| • New Construction | • Training |
| • Renovations | • Consulting |
| • Service | • Hardscaping |
| • Mid-Season Maintenance | • Marketing |
| • Fall Maintenance | • Overhead |

drive-by, training, consulting, hardscaping, marketing and overhead.

I view each of these classes, or categories, as if it were its own stand-alone businesses. They represent the only reasons someone would give me money or how I would spend money. With the press of a button, I can tell if I'm ahead or behind in

job. At the end of the year, they hand the shoebox to an accountant, expecting him or her to make sense of the mess. Does this sound like you?

It does require discipline. Truly, most of us can get this done in one hour each week, if we make the inputs consistently every week. But

just like going to the gym, we skip one week, and then two, and before we know it, we haven't been to the gym in two years. Been there, done that.

Within one week of a job's completion, I make a point of knowing exactly how much money was made on that specific job. If I was diligent about inputting the info, one press of a button will tell me the truth. I don't wait until an accountant tells me at the end of the year. Usually it's way too late to react and right your sinking ship if you do your accounting that way.

Gross Profit Margin

Our goal is to always make a minimum gross profit margin of 50 percent on each job, no matter how large. This also includes all classes. For example, at the end of the spring cleaning season, I just hit the magic button, and QuickBooks will tell me if we hit our goal — 50 percent or greater — for the year in that class.

Gross profit margin includes everything you had to buy to specifically get that job done. Everything else is overhead. The size of your operation and how efficient you are will determine your overhead as a percentage of your

gross profit margin.

- Input your numbers every week.
- Confirm how you did within one week of each job completion.
- Repeat.

This is the simple formula I have

Be Consistent

I've met too many contractors who simply throw all their job receipts into a shoebox — job after job. At the end of the year, they hand the shoebox to an accountant, expecting him or her to make sense of the mess. Does this sound like you?

- It requires discipline
- It only requires one hour per week if you input consistently every week.
- You should make a point of determining exactly how much money was made within a week of a job's completion.

overall sales. Obviously, the lower that number, the better.

To summarize our simple approach to business:

- Bid every job to make a 50-percent

followed repeatedly over the last 15 years, and we haven't had a down year in this time period.

I realize that some of you feel you can't bid your jobs with a 50-percent

gross profit margin. You could price yourself out of the market. This is your call. My attitude is that the customer will pay what we are strong enough to ask for. The final price has nothing to do with what they would have paid in the first place.

Have you ever been

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Last year I co-founded the Contractor Sales Academy with my friend, Tom Reber, to help other small contractors get a handle on their businesses.

We've created a group of

I make a point of knowing exactly how much money was made on that specific job. If I was diligent about inputting the info, one press of a button will tell me the truth. I don't wait until an accountant tells me at the end of the year.

dismissed from a backyard because your price was too high? I have plenty of times. They say, "I just can't pay \$20,000 for you to fix up my pond." Then, as I'm walking to my car, I pass their garage with his-and-hers, matching Mercedes-Benzes! This situation and how to handle it is a whole different topic, but my point is that you have to present a perceived value.

like-minded companies that share everything from sales and attitude to wins and losses. And yes, we hold QuickBooks webinars, too. Do you have a place where you can go to learn how to improve your current situation? Are you enjoying running your business? Are you making the money you deserve? The average Home Depot manager makes

Rinse and Repeat

To summarize our simple approach to business:

- Bid every job to make a 50-percent gross profit margin. My attitude is that the customer will pay what we are strong enough to ask for. The final price has nothing to do with what they would have paid in the first place.
- Input your numbers every week.
- Confirm how you did within one week of each job completion.
- Input your numbers every week.



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\$91,000 per year, according to Google. Think about it. Are you "having fun, changing lives and making money?"

If you are not tracking your numbers, then you are just winging it. The end game — your eventual retirement — depends on more than simply a hope and prayer. So, either start tracking your numbers or consider hiring someone who will do it for you. You deserve a good life. But only you can take the necessary actions in order to make it happen. ☛

About the Author

Steve Shinholser is the owner of Premier Ponds LLC. He has been in the aquatics field for his entire life. Originally from Richmond, Virginia, he attended the University of Maryland on a diving scholarship. His love for the water has carried over into his professional life. He co-founded the nation's largest swimming pool management company in 1984. He sold his interest in that company in October 1995.



In 2001, he completed his first pond. The experience was so moving that he decided that water features would be his next passion. He founded Premier Ponds LLC and has since built more than 500 water features.

Steve is a regularly invited speaker at numerous pond conventions all over the nation. In 2013, Steve was awarded the "Businessman of the Year" award by Aquascape Inc.

In 2015, Steve co-founded the Contractors Sales Academy with Tom Reber. This interactive web and phone-based program is designed to teach others how to run their businesses better, make more money and start enjoying the life they deserve.

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Stop it!

Tips for troubleshooting water loss & leaks

by Jerry Romano,
Liquid Designz LLC

I would like to thank POND Trade magazine for asking me to shed more light on an all-too-common topic — water loss and leaks that occur in water features. I will focus on some different issues that cause water loss and discuss how to help recognize them before they escalate. Maybe it will help you prevent them in the first place.

Some of these issues may seem redundant to many of you, but I intend to shed some light on the obvious and the not-so-obvious, along with the common and the not-so-common. As a well-known, respected water feature installer in our beloved industry, I encourage all feedback from all who

take the time to read this. This is how we all become stronger as a group — by learning from each other and sharing.

Pond Leaks

I'm not going to go into the basics, such as shutting off the pond, waiting until it stops dropping, and checking around the perimeter. I'm also not a big advocate of the milk test — when milky liquid makes its way to the area that has been compromised. This has never worked the few times we have tried it.

However, there is a product on the market known as Pond Seal. It is a combination of sodium bentonite clay that is bonded to a limestone aggregate, which creates a small, gravel-like nugget that sinks directly to the bottom of the pond. The clay particles swell when they get wet, creating a seal over the problem area without altering the water chemis-

try. Some of its claimed successful uses are around drains or intake pipes, along with any cuts or tears in the liner. My company, Liquid Designz, has never tried this product.

Biofalls & Skimmers

Yes, skimmers are becoming less common for the more advanced installer, as we move toward the likes of collection coves and intake bays. But, skimmers are still a staple and will continue to be, in my opinion. Biofalls, of course, are a huge component for many designs.

First, let's start by eliminating silicone and roofing adhesives and moving to a fish-safe, lap sealant manufactured by the likes of Carlisle or Firestone, among others. These lap sealants become water-ready more quickly and will not break down like silicone. We also use this to outline the perimeter of our seams and patches.

Biofall snout screws can also offer a great solution. Start using stainless steel washers with these screws, as some of the holes can become a bit too big, causing the head of screw to sink in, which is not a good thing!



Notice the difference between the original screws and the self-tapping screws that were added after the fact on this skimmer.

An easy way to test this is to apply the lap sealant, and then use washers on one side of the biofalls and no washers on the other side. Tighten the screws, and you will see how the washer side squeezes out more lap sealant due to the tighter seal.



At top is a poor, oversized cut to accommodate the skimmer face plate. We used high-quality cover tape and a cleaner to cut it down to the correct size.

This is not too much of a problem on most skimmers, as the screw holes are much smaller. However, we do use some self-tapping screws to secure a tighter seal. The big issue with skimmers is the cutting of the liner to accommodate most face plates. It's so important to make smaller cuts, because the liner can stretch.

If you find you have overcut the area and you begin to panic, relax! Pull out the liner, lay it on a flat surface and then pray you have some cover tape and primer in your truck. Prime the outer area about 3 inches around the perimeter and cover the entire area, including the cutout, with high-quality cover tape. Recut your opening — and don't screw this one up.

Another problem area, as many of you know, occurs at the bottom of both the skimmer and the biofalls. Don't be stingy; make sure you leave plenty of slack, so that you don't create a trampoline effect as you start placing rocks so snugly that they literally pull the liner away from the screws and sealant. This creates serious water loss in an area that you might not recognize right away — of course until the dreaded search for the leak begins.

A tip: There have been many occasions when we actually install what we call the "Aqua Cape," which is a large piece of liner that is already attached to the biofalls. Just be sure to leave plenty of liner on either side of the biofalls based on the size of the framing boulders you will be using. We simply bring the main liner up the front of the biofalls and attach it with seam tape. Then we flash the Aqua Cape over the main liner. This is a great way to train new staff members in a comfortable atmosphere, instead of on a job site where time is always of the essence.

A few warnings: We never cover our bulkheads until the biofalls is tested with the pump running. It's worth every ounce of inconvenience. We also never dump a heavy load of dirt or rock on top of the bulkhead unless it is supported underneath the pipe. Don't overtighten!

Streams & Waterfalls

When you have determined that there aren't any open issues in your pond or reservoir, you can start to test for any potential water loss within the



Here we tested a section of a water feature using the original pump.

stream and waterfall areas. It is a bit of a process to do this correctly, but it will help you pin down the location of a leak more quickly if, in fact, the leak is in the stream or waterfall.

If you cannot use the existing pump, use a separate pump that is close to its pump volume. You can begin moving the pipe or hose in 6-foot sections up the watercourse. This is key, because you want a pump with a similar flow, so that the water within the stream and waterfalls encompasses the width of the watercourse, along with any elevations the water would normally reach. This will help you get a read on a particular area should there be an issue. Make your way throughout the watercourse using the same methods. If your pond or pondless reservoir begins to lose water, you know the culprit is somewhere in that section.

For example, let's say you have a system with a 6,000-gph pump. If you test it with a different, 3,000-gph pump, the water level will never rise to the height it typically

reaches. There could be a hole in your edge work somewhere, but because the water never crests to that level, you'll never know.

Wetland & Pooling Areas

Wetland areas are becoming more and more common components of our designs. They help create a much more natural-looking start to our water features



Here's an example of how we bridge up and down into the centipede when we don't bulkhead.

and provide the installer great flexibility in determining what size filter is needed.

They are also a great home to many

species of aquatic plants and a popular hangout for moles, muskrats, chipmunks and other critters that can chew their way through the liner. This obviously causes a water-loss issue that may not be an easy fix.

Depending on your setup, solving this problem can be very similar to finding a leak in a pond; however, it could be much easier, as the size and depth of the wetlands

are normally smaller. You need to be sure the water level has stopped dropping — and by this, I'm referring to any areas that were foamed for waterfall spills. Here, the water will dissipate through the foamed area. Usually the water level will drop to where the issue is located, and you can then begin removing rocks to find

the problem. We typically patch with a strong cover tape and surround the edges with lap sealant.

As far as deterring the varmints, it's obvious that geotextile fabric is not so good at this, but there are some good options out there. One is concrete padding, which we have been hearing quite a bit about recently. However, it isn't cheap. The other option is a staple in Liquid Designz's installations, both

the use of underground, electronic mole repellents has worked very well for one of our clients, as it has kept unwanted critters away from the area.

One of the other problem areas that we have encountered is where the pipe actually enters into the wetland itself and attaches to the centipede. If you're one of



This small, natural wetland area was once ridden with multiple chipmunk holes. We fixed the issue three years ago, and since then, not one varmint has dared to disrupt this beauty.

for deterring varmints and protecting liner from large boulder placement. Commercial underlay for carpeting is a must for covering poor excavation conditions, such as rocky slate or shale-like soil. It consists of a very thick, felt material — not rubber — that is four times the thick-



Here, we found where the liner was ripped by a varmint in a small wetland area.

ness of standard rock padding. You may have to run your system for a couple of days to pump out the initial water before adding fish, but we use this product in all of our designs to protect the liner under large rocks. We have never had an issue with commercial underlay. If all else fails,

those installers who is comfortable with bulk heading through the liner, that is a great way to go. Just be precise with your cuts, and more importantly, be certain regarding the location where you plan to create the bulkhead on the liner. Also be sure to place a piece of cover tape over the liner where you are cutting your hole for the bulk head union, so it is strong enough to avoid tearing or wrinkling the liner as you tighten. Be sure there is plenty of liner pulled up high while you mark your entrance point, or points for multiple bulkheads.

You also can go up and over, as we have done on many occasions in the past. But should we decide not to bulkhead, we would do it a bit differently. We've packed mounds of dirt high enough to be sure we were above water level — but trust me, it settles over time due to the downward pressure on the pipe caused by larger rocks, just the standard settling of the soil. In this case, we take the pipe to just below the top of the compacted berm and use multiple 22 or 45-degree fittings, depending on what works best. We then turn the

initial fitting on its back so that it's pointing upward to gradually go up, over and down into the wetland, forming a strong bridge with minimal water restriction. We then put some flat gravel underneath the fittings just for some support. This works extremely well.

Flashing Liners

As most of us would probably agree, a good 6 inches of flashing the liner will suffice and avoid any loss related to water coming upward and backward. However, sometimes you get so involved in the design that you decide to get creative and form a 6-inch-deep pool just below the flashing shelf, just for argument's sake. Now, you have to create some sort of spill to exit that pool, which will now elevate the water to where it can — and will — creep its way back beyond the flash. The worst part is, you might not catch this until after you notice an issue, which could cause you to start ripping things apart while your crew is staring at you like you've gone mad. The easiest solution is to remember where you flash, keeping your design moving downward and not pooling unless you're farther down in the design. And of course — you should just seam everything!

Two years ago, I might've played the role of the mad contractor. I did the whole flashing thing and did not seam, but I had almost a foot of liner flash. However, guess what else had more



Imagine the wood here is soil. Even if you flash but don't seam, your geotextile can wick water upward and back to the open soil area.

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than a foot of flashing. Yes, you guessed it — geotextile, which I use quite a bit, because I like to sleep nights. Well, I might as well have polished off a six-pack of Monster Energy drink, because I wasn't sleeping for the few days that followed. As you have probably guessed by now, the geotextile wicked the water continuously, and when I finally found the problem, there was a 6-inch pool of mud. Again, just seam everything! Otherwise, be extra careful.

Pond & Stream Edges

Another area notorious for wicking is on a pond or stream edge. My ex-foreman, due to his know-it-all attitude, could never grasp this. He would do an amazing job on edge work, and then I would see our outer layer of protective geotextile going over the liner and, of course, into the water, whether it be a stream or pond.



A soil probe tester is a cool gadget for finding water loss around pond or stream edges. It goes down 8 inches and detects soil moisture.



Here's a very common error. Don't let your lowest protective underlay come over your liner and make contact with the water. It will also wick out of the pond. Don't rush your edge treatments that might allow the underlayment to contact the water.

This is why you check everything.

Still going crazy trying to find that leak? Let's say the pond seems to be holding water, but an unusually slow, steady loss of water is occurring over time. It might be time to check around the perimeter of the pond's edges and below the edge work and grade, as low as your first shelf. I have found that a soil probe tester works great. As you stick the long probe into the ground around different areas of the pond's perimeter, the soil gauge will indicate how wet the area is. Make sure to test when area has been dry for a couple of days, without runoff, sprinklers or, obviously, rain.

Stumps, Driftwood & Stones

I have found over the years that authentic, petrified driftwood is truly the only style of wood that you can use within the water itself, whether it just touches the water or is completely submerged. Sure, you can still accent or do some cool edge work with other wood, but it will eventually rot. Yes, bark looks cool, but that will be the first to go. The locust tree is a great source for implementing a timber accent into your designs, but even these will eventually break down.

I once built a pond that led to a negative edge stream constructed entirely over Aqua Blocks. We had used a very cool-looking, thick, dense stump, which also had an arm coming off the side of it. It was obviously used for aesthetics, but it also served as the gateway or transition from the pond to the stream area. I had also seamed a section in the middle of the pond due to a miscalculation of the design and liner size.



This gorgeous, natural stump (top) has lasted nine years, as it is barely in contact with the water. The pondless job (bottom) with the encircled large stump that dropped the water 6 inches is shown the first day before full retention was achieved.

We filled up the system and turned on the pumps. We left for the day, only to return to a snorkel that was down a good 6 inches. I was livid, because I knew I had seamed it perfectly. So, I checked the seam at both ends under the liner, and it was bone dry. I found

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myself scratching my head and looking around for the source of the water loss. It was then that I noticed that the water level on the huge stump was not consistent and was very slowly moving up the stump. You guessed it — the problem was the stump. The very next day, the water level was perfect, and there hasn't been another issue since. The stump had run its course and retained as much water as it was going to. It was quite a relief and a learning moment. By the way, that stump is also rotting.

You might not realize it, but stones can also absorb water. For instance, flagstone is a highly absorbent stone, but it does not absorb deeply because of stone layering. Limestone, on the other hand is deeply absorbent because of its soft texture. It's also very soluble, meaning it actually becomes dissolved by the water over time. The longer limestone is exposed to the elements, the more porous it becomes. Sandstone absorbs and retains water significantly, while slate, although not to the same degree as the other three types of stone, is still very absorbent.

Evaporation & Splashing

What has the weather been like? When the humidity levels are low, the dry atmosphere acts like a sponge, absorbing the water from your pond. It can cause your pond to lose up to



Strong water flow and steeper elevation drops can cause unexpected amounts of water loss. These photos show some of the more pronounced effects of splashing and evaporation in a water environment.

an inch of water every day. To rule out evaporation as the culprit, fill the pond back up and keep an eye on the water level. Any more than an inch of water loss over a 24-hour period could indicate a leak. Larger waterfalls and quickly running streams, such as rapids, may tend to lose more water. There are many variables that go into determining water loss where evaporation and splashing is a concern. You can run all the formulas you want, but the fact is that evaporation is difficult to pinpoint. Splashing, on the other hand, you can see, alter and somewhat control.

In closing, I certainly hope this information will help you understand what to look for and how to troubleshoot and solve any water-loss issues you may encounter down the road. Regardless of the situation, always remember that occasionally there will always be that one stumper you just can't figure out. ☺

About the Author

Jerry Romano founded Liquid Designz LLC in 2005. Though his calling in the pond industry came later in life, there is no doubt in his mind what he was always meant to do.

He has an enormous amount of pride in his work, just as he did in college as a nationally-ranked punter, which culminated in his induction into the Minor League Football Hall of Fame. Jerry's work ethic and enthusiasm have carried over to his business and the pond industry as a whole.

As an artist and craftsman, Jerry is always looking to push the envelope in both the design and build aspects of the industry, while providing courteous and efficient customer service. Liquid Designz is highly regarded in the field, with a focus on sharing knowledge and learning from other top companies within the pond industry.



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Falling for Color

Celebrate the colors
of fall pondside

by Larry Carnes,
Reflections Water Gardens

It won't be long before the trees turn and you pull out your favorite sweater to enjoy the crisp air and calming hues of autumn. Once the marginals and deep-water plants begin to die back, it is time to prune them and send them to deeper waters before winter.

Preparing a pond for the upcoming cold months does not mean foregoing color. If winterizing your flowering water plants leaves you with all green, it's time to think about incorporating some border plants that will add a different kind of beauty for every season, including dimension and color in the fall. Our eyes are drawn upward into the trees during this time, but with some foresight and proper planning, seasonal color around the pond can blend and blossom along with the weather.

Whether your pond is long established or brand-new, it's important to consider planting with all seasons in mind. This is often overlooked, as the concentration of flowers in spring and the long-lasting color through summer tend to take precedence. Planting with all seasons in mind makes for beautiful, seasonal transitioning. Foliage and flowers that add interest, depth, texture and color to the fall landscape take some planning and time, but are well worth the time and effort. A bit of research into color schemes, balance, focal points and zones will help. It's not easy designing a landscape that incorporates all seasons. But even if you are a beginner, there are some simple things you can do to continue to enjoy color around your pond.

Before planting, it is important to do some zone research and think about heights and



Always keep in mind that the visual impact is amplified near water — the reflection will duplicate your landscape!

variations. Always keep in mind that the visual impact is amplified near water — the reflection will duplicate your landscape!

Trees and Shrubs

As with any planting, zone research is critical. Choose trees and shrubs for color, texture and visual interest. Some trees and shrubs provide contrast not only in the foliage, but in the bark as well. Bark that peels or has unique color adds tons of character.

Dogwoods, spruces and evergreens are great backdrops for lower-growing plants. Many species are hardy in several zones and provide color throughout fall and winter. Japanese maples are wonderful to have around water. They do require a bit more care than a standard maple, especially when young. Plant these in a partly shady area with well-drained soil, away from strong, windy areas. There are many varieties of this tree, but nearly all of them

will provide remarkable color in the fall.

Grasses and Groundcovers

Grasses and groundcovers can add a variety of texture to the landscape. An excellent groundcover that blooms from spring through fall is sedum, a drought-tolerant succulent that needs mild pruning if it begins creeping too far. A mixed sedum around walkways or the edge of the pond softens and adds small bursts of color. Grasses, reeds and grass-like plants need to be planted according to their specific species. Some grasses can tolerate

a dry, hot location, but others require moist soil. Grasses provide many shades in autumn, from golden ambers to silvery blues. One of my favorites is fountain grass, or *Pennisetum alopecuroides*. It's easy to grow and provides color and texture to any landscape. It is also very easy to care for and produces fuzzy blooms, which soften their spiked leaves. It will grow up to 5 feet in the right conditions. Red fountain grass is a great fall accent.

We recently incorporated some herbs — thyme, oregano and rosemary — into a rocky edge of a pond. They add

A fall collection of mixed sedum, prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*, with a fragrance that some liken to buttery popcorn) and a service berry (*Amelanchier*)



Weeping Norway spruce (*Picea abies* 'Pendula'), Tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*) and purple flame grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Purpurascens')



Autumn is especially nice for reflecting experiences in, on and above the water.

fragrance and texture to the area and can be harvested throughout the fall.

Flowers

You can plant just about any flower around a pond, but consider what you want the focus to be before adding flowers. The eye will be pulled to color first, possibly

redirecting your attention away from the intended purpose of the pond, such as a waterfall or stream. Deciding on the color and texture is a combination of personal preference, hardiness and location. As with any flower, checking for light and shade requirements is important. Choose your color palate and create a basic layout in order to



Mixed sedum provides color and texture and is a hardy groundcover.

Hanging over water, Japanese maples can give astonishing reflections in all seasons.



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avoid planting larger flowers in front of low-growing ones. Here are a few flowers hardy in Zone 5:


The Japanese Anemone (*Anemone hupehensis*) is a graceful, yet hardy flower that is both sun and shade-tolerant and available in white, pinks and purple. It can grow up to 5 feet. The blooms add a gentle touch of elegance and grace.

Dahlias pack a punch of color! In front of a sea of anemone, they will certainly turn heads. These are grown from tubers, and if a particularly cold winter is in the forecast, you might want to dig them up before the snow falls. Dahlias come in a variety of sizes and colors, so be sure to choose the right size for the location.

For both color and smell, Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) will do the

trick. The tall spikes grow from 3 to 5 feet, but smaller varieties can be found that stay around 2 feet tall. There are both dark and light blues available.

Set Your Sights on the Seasons

As cooler weather approaches, add interest, depth and color with a plan in mind for transitional color, unity and balance. It is important to find plants that are appropriate for your zone, considering both the cold approaching weather and the heat they must live through until blooming season starts next year. From spring through summer and into fall, your pondscape should be dynamic — an ever-changing visual and emotional appeal of textures and colors. 



About the Author

Larry Carnes is the president of Reflections Water Gardens in West Dundee, Illinois. Larry began his career as a student of art and developed an interest in landscaping. He worked for several companies, gaining knowledge in tree care, patio design and installation and landscape architecture. He renders concepts for his clients that are pieces of art as much as they are working designs. After assisting a pond builder in creating a unique, in-ground pond/pool for his family, Larry's landscaping interest turned to water features. Larry has taken Genesis 3 courses with Anthony Archer-Wills, learning to design and create natural-looking ponds and water features. Reflections Water Gardens focuses on high-end residential and commercial projects with naturalistic watershaping. To learn more, visit reflectionswatergardens.com.



Top left to bottom: fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*), Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), Japanese Anemone (*Anemone hupehensis*), dahlia and asters.



Koi are often called "living jewels." The shimmering, metallic skin on this koi exhibits excellent luster — similar to precious gold.

Shine on!

Hikari Muji bring a metallic luster to the pond

by **Ellen Kloubec**,
Kloubec Koi Farm

I've heard from some koi retailers that the shiny koi, or Hikari varieties, are usually the first to sell from their fish retail tanks. The shimmering beauty of all Hikari koi, whether single or multicolored, is eye-catching and very much admired by their customers. It's the shiny metallic skin and flashy pectoral fins that make these types of koi very popular with pond owners and koi enthusiasts. In this first installment of a series for POND Trade, you will learn about the characteristics of the Hikari varieties and how to distinguish them from their nonmetallic equivalents. You'll

also learn what to look for when evaluating the Hikari types.

There are three classes of Hikari Koi: Hikari Muji, Hikari Utsuri and Hikari Moyo. We'll focus on just one class, Hikari Muji, in this initial installment.

Metallic Skin with Luster

All Hikari koi varieties, regardless of class, have skin that is metallic. Shimmery, metallic skin with luster is their common characteristic and the unique trait that groups them together. The Japanese word *hikari* means "shining," so it makes sense that all koi in the Hikari classes have shiny, metallic skin with

luster. However, do not confuse metallic skin with shiny *ginrin* scales, which is an entirely separate classification.

Strong luster, or sheen, is highly

What is LUSTER?

The web dictionary defines luster as the state or quality of shining by reflecting light; glitter, sparkle, sheen or gloss.

desirable on the skin of Hikari varieties. The term "luster" refers to the light-reflecting quality of the skin. Luster should cover the entire koi, apparent

from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail, and all the way through the fins. The metallic skin should shine like polished gun metal. The quality and consistency of the luster is highly scrutinized at koi shows. An easy way to understand luster is to visualize a piece of satin fabric. Satin is bright and iridescent, appearing thick with a heavy sheen, regardless of color. By comparing this satin fabric to a plain cotton material, its luster becomes obvious. Or, just compare plain glass beads to a strand of pearls. Both will be shiny, but the pearls will have a thick, iridescent quality. This is the essence of luster.

There are clues to help identify koi of the Hikari types. Learning to recognize



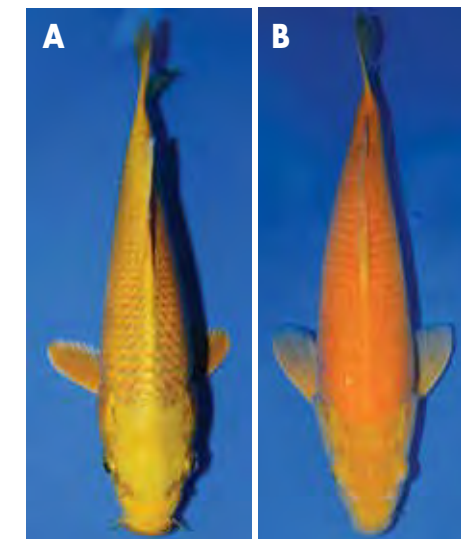
Hikari koi have iridescent skin, similar to pearls. Non-metallic koi lack this characteristic. Comparing glass beads to pearls may help you visualize the difference between metallic and non-metallic koi.

iridescent metallic skin is your first step. Thoroughly examine your koi and evaluate its skin for a metallic sheen. Does its skin have iridescence, or the attractive and distinctive feature known as luster? Look at the head and face for the presence of luster or shimmer. Now look at the pectoral fins. Do they appear heavy and thick with color and shine, or are they slightly transparent? Next, study the scales to determine if they are covered with pearl-like skin. Focusing on these areas for the presence of sheen will help differentiate metallic from nonmetallic skin types. Remember that all Hikari koi varieties have shiny, metallic skin, from nose to tail.

Fins and Scales

Just like many of the other koi varieties, the Hikari types are bred with elongated, flowing fins, or butterfly fins — though sometimes they are hard to find. The fins on Hikari varieties, whether traditional or butterfly, should have a thick and lustrous

appearance. This characteristic is attributed to the radiance of its metallic skin and is quite a contrast to nonmetallic fins, which are often transparent on young koi. The



WHICH KOI IS A HIKARI TYPE? The Yamabuki Ogon and Kigoi are both single-colored, yellow fish. Compare these two yellow koi and determine which is a Hikari type. (Look closely at the skin to determine which is metallic and belongs in the Hikari Muji class.) Answer: Koi B is non-metallic, so Koi A is of the Hikari variety.

prominent and showy pectoral fins on Hikari varieties contribute to their popularity.

Most of the koi in the three Hikari classes are *wagoi*, which means that their bodies are totally covered with scales. Hikari types may also be found with Doitsu scales. Doitsu is the term used to describe koi with German heritage, which have scales present only along the spine and occasionally along the lateral line. In fact, a few Hikari varieties, such as Kikusui, are always of the Doitsu type.

Ginrin, or *kin-gin-rin*, refers to highly reflective, sparkly scales, or diamond scales, and is sometimes incorrectly referred to as metallic. *Ginrin* is a scale variation and not the same as metallic skin. These are two completely different characteristics and are sometimes hard for a novice to differentiate. The light-reflective, sparkly effect of *ginrin* is reminiscent of tin foil and is only evident on the scales, not on the koi's head or fins. Iridescent metallic skin, on the other hand, is evident in all these locations. To add to the confusion, Hikari koi may also sometimes have *ginrin* scales.

After you've determined the Hikari

type of koi, you'll evaluate the colors and pattern — or lack of pattern — to properly identify the right Hikari class for your koi. Many koi varieties fall into each of the three Hikari classes. Being able to name them correctly can be a challenge. Some are easy to recognize, and some take a little more time and effort to identify. The age and lineage, as well as the stage of pigment and pattern development, are all factors to consider for accurate identification. Often the lines become blurred between one type and another, but with practice, you will be able to name each one.

The Hikari Muji Class

The first class to study is the Hikari Muji, or Hikari Mono group. The koi in this class are single-colored, metallic fish, and most are Ogon. In Japanese, *muji* (or *mono*) means one, referring to the fact that each is a single-colored fish, devoid of a pattern or markings. Since there are neither patterns nor multiple colors to evaluate, the qualities of luster and color are paramount.

Luster on the Ogon's skin is of utmost importance. The luster should extend



This Hikari Muji (left) is an Orenge Ogon butterfly variety. It has good luster and deep, consistent color over its entire body and fins. This young Doitsu Platinum Ogon (right) has outstanding sheen, similar to a pearl. Look for these features when evaluating Hikari Muji varieties.

completely over the body and fins. This shimmery sheen will make your Ogon visible even in water of less-than-desired clarity. A strong luster is preferred, so evaluate the entire fish — even its fins — for the presence of luster. As the Ogon lack accompa-

nying markings or patterns, the condition of its skin luster and the body conformation become essential points of appreciation. Excellent luster is that which evenly covers the entire body. Additionally, a full, voluminous body is desired. Generally, koi of the Hikari Muji group quickly become accustomed to humans and can easily be trained to accept food from an owner's hand. With a hearty appetite, the Ogon can rapidly grow to a large size.

Color is another major characteristic to consider. It should be solid and consistent from the nose to the tail, with no variance. When color is rich and constant, it is often referred to as deep, or thick. The intense and vibrant skin color on Hikari Muji varieties propel them to the top of the list for many hobbyists.

Generally, colored pigments are distorted or transformed slightly on the luxurious, metallic base of Hikari koi. Yellow tends to become a rich, golden color, and white

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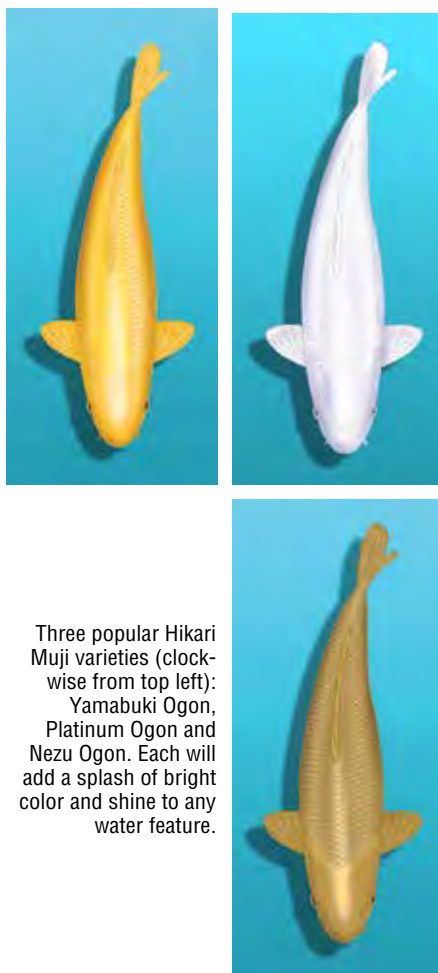
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Three popular Hikari Muji varieties (clockwise from top left): Yamabuki Ogon, Platinum Ogon and Nezu Ogon. Each will add a splash of bright color and shine to any water feature.

will tend to have a glistening, silver hue. Choose a koi with good, consistent coloration overall, without blemishes from a concentration or lack of pigment.

There are many koi of one color in this class. The majority happens to be Ogon. Remember that every fish in the Hikari Muji class is a single-colored, metallic-skinned koi.

Popular varieties of koi in the Hikari Muji class include:

- Yamabuki Ogon – A yellow-colored, metallic koi
- Platinum Ogon – A white-colored, metallic koi
- Orengi Ogon – An orange-colored, metallic koi
- Hi Ogon – A red-colored, metallic koi
- Nezu Ogon – A gray-brown-colored, metallic koi

The head and body should be clear of blemishes and random pigment spots. The fins should be the same color as the body. Some Ogon have white-tipped fins, which is perfectly acceptable.

Matsuba Varieties



Sumi on the scales of Gin Matsuba, known as reticulation, are often referred to as pinecone scales. Notice the clean, iridescent, platinum color on the base, with prominent luster.

Kin Matsuba (gold) and Gin Matsuba (silver) are still considered to be single-colored, metallic koi.

The same guidelines for depth and clarity of color that apply to the Ogon also apply to Matsuba. Luster is also expected on the metallic Matsuba. The sheen should cover the entire fish, including the fins, producing a smooth, polished appearance.

Use the tips you've learned in this article to evaluate a koi's color and skin type to properly identify its class and variety. Again, if your koi is single-colored and has metallic skin with iridescence or luster, you may conclude that it belongs in the Hikari Muji class.

In the next issue, we will discuss the Hikari Utsuri and Hikari Moyo classes. Also, be sure to check out illustrations of these and many other koi varieties on the Kloubeck Koi Farm website. www.kloubeckkoi.com/ellens-koi-education.

About the Author

Ellen Kloubeck and her husband

Myron began their aquaculture business in 1981, and their farm consists of 80 acres of mud ponds. Together with their son Nick, they raise and supply healthy and hardy koi to wholesale customers

throughout the United States and Canada. Ellen loves all things koi.

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This water feature at the Warrior and Family Support Center on Fort Sam Houston anchors the gardens where wounded military heroes and their families can recover, heal and get reacquainted with each other. The varying sounds of waterfalls from all angles, shallow and deep pools of streaming water, amazing combinations of Texas Hill Country rock and driftwood and endless beauty provide an ideal, tranquil atmosphere to promote healing and relaxation.

Streaming Live

Tips for building that perfect stream

by **Shane Stefek**,
Water Garden Gems

Streams are amazing — they bring their surroundings to life! The combination of water sounds created in a stream stands apart from the sounds of all other water features. You can have a mixture of soothing trickling, playful gurgling, waterfall crash-

ing and relaxed babbling all in a single, flowing water feature, simply by using the proper elevation, curvatures and character rocks. Streams also lure in wildlife like no other water feature can: the deer standing in the shallows while they take a drink, the birds bathing along the surface and the butterflies and hummingbirds absorbing moisture from the wet rocks. In essence, you are

creating a new oasis for life by building a stream.

How Do You Build That Perfect Stream?

The real question should be: “How do you build a stream perfect for our situation?” You have to let the feature come to life for itself based on the slope, topography, space, landscaping and the native rock and flora. You have

to create the stream as you envision it existing naturally, striving to see what is not there — yet. You also have to know how a stream behaves in nature and how the water creates its own flow and direction over time. The more you study natural streams, creeks and rivers, the more capable you will be to imitate this wonder in a controlled, man-made space.

Every stream has an origin, a flow and an end. So, in defining the stream, we give it meaning, purpose and character. But above that, we define how, where and why it exists. This becomes our building block.

The Beginning and the End

Our first key questions should center on where the stream will start and how will it finish its course. Perhaps the stream will be an underground spring bubbling up from nowhere with a soothing, babbling-brook

Every stream has an origin, a flow and an end. So, in defining the stream, we give it meaning, purpose and character. But above that, we define how, where and why it exists.

effect through the pebbles and down a couple of short, bridge-stone drops. Maybe it will start as a waterfall that empties into a small pool and then cascades here and there, working around a deck or patio while bringing life and beauty along with it. Or will it pour down from a higher pond, fall over a couple of ledges and drop as a full waterfall into a large koi pond adorned with a dozen of the most colorful specimens of living art? If there is no pond, you can take the stream to its end by falling off a ledge onto a pool of river rocks where it seemingly disappears, or perhaps by gradually rolling it into some gravel, watching it vanish into a dry creek bed or under a walking bridge.

The options are many, but the perfect stream has a perfect beginning and the perfect end. The location and overall purpose help us determine this.

Use Your Slope

Water flows down the hill — it doesn’t get much simpler than that! But we want to take that law of nature and make it beautiful. We want to create the correct topography and elevation for our stream so that it gives us the visual and sound we’re looking for. Each type of stream

You can have beautiful falls that are 4 to 6 inches in elevation, but they are not going to give you much volume. If you drop the water 1 to 2 feet over a ledge, you will achieve much greater volume and a larger visual to enjoy. The more water that flows over the falls, the louder it will be.

Also consider in your design where



Carefully choosing your bridge stones and flow-throughs from pool to pool can create that naturalistic look you are going for in your stream. Uneven ledges allow the water to flow in different directions, as gravity naturally draws it downward to the next level. Careful placement of driftwood and plants in naturally occurring locations helps bring this stream to life.



This stream spans the length of the back of this home and runs along the slab between the house and the landscaped pool and gardens. This shows how you can use the pre-existing landscape and topography to your advantage. Water is released at the base of the large oak tree as an upflowing spring, which joins the flowing stream alongside the house and then trickles and falls into a lower pool with dry-stacked flagstone.

may call for a different elevation drop, but at minimum you need 2 feet of rise for every 20 feet of land to create enough slope. Keep in mind that falling water creates sound and visual appeal, so how far should it fall, and how many times?

exactly you want to drop your water. Water falling on rocks will create a higher-pitched sound than water falling into a pool of water. The pool’s depth will determine the pitch and tone of the sound. We can manipulate the sounds of our



stream with how we build the falls. Ideally, we will have a wide variety of pitches and volume by incorporating short, rolling falls, higher drops, gurgling twists and different depths throughout the stream.

The Power of Water

Your pump selection should be based on the amount of water you need to move at key points of the feature. Much like sizing-up a pump to a waterfall and using the width of the weir or largest bridge stone as you guide, you must both fill the stream with flow and create its character. A babbling brook, which is

shallow and soothing by nature with minimal, soft sounds, will require 100 to 150 gph per inch of width at your widest key point; however, a creek or stream may require 250 to 500 gph per inch of width, especially if you have to contend with some depth where much of the water flow is hidden from view. If you want to create a Rocky Mountain-like glacier flow, you could be in the range of 750 to 1,000 gph per inch of width to create the gushing effect and white water you desire.

Choose Rocks Wisely

Your rock selection can make or break your creation.

Top: During construction, you can see the canyons, bridge stone drops and rocks held together with spray foam, creating a completely natural-looking stream in this backyard. Bottom: After completion, it looks like the water has carved out the walls along the creek bed over time. This feature brings the yard and patio together with uniqueness and character.



You should use the material that you are trying to imitate. Look at your surroundings and use rock that is found naturally. If you are building a glacier-fed mountain

The artist in you comes to life when it's time to place your rocks. This is the essence of your stream, because your rock positioning will determine how the water flows.

stream where rocks are generally more round than flat, you need to mirror that. Likewise, if you are in limestone country, most of your rock should be flat and stacked.

The artist in you comes to life when it's time to place your rocks. This is the essence of your stream, because your rock positioning will determine how the water flows and speaks to the listener. As with



A simple, babbling brook oozes out from under the aquatic plants and landscape, over rock and gravel, and into a small, shallow pool. The use of four falls in three completely different directions and the 3-D effect of the small falls behind the other falls bring this water feature to life in a very small, compact area.

waterfalls, I recommend that you position your bridge stones first, followed by your edge rocks, creating a raw visual of the path the water will travel. Once that is done, and before you throw the stream

bottom rocks around, pour water through your feature and see how it works. Do you like the left-to-right movement and the location and height of the falls?

When you are satisfied, you can firmly

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Multiple trickle streams and short falls enter the large pool together and create a larger flow down the rest of the creek. Make sure to landscape around the water feature to bring it all together and make it look like it has been there all along.

set the rocks in place. Some contractors like to dry-stack, while others prefer mortar. Personally, I prefer to use canned foam to hold my rocks in place because it's less toxic, softer and not as harsh on

the liner — not to mention the fact that it makes it much easier to remove and adjust rocks if you need to, or make repairs down the line if the situation presents itself. Regardless of what material you choose,

you will definitely want to set your key formation rocks in place. The rocks on the stream floor are more often tossed in the stream and dry-stacked as needed.

The Supporting Cast


Natural streams are not just about rocks. There is a huge opportunity to use driftwood and plants to bring life and realism to your project. Driftwood can work well within streams if placed correctly. Logs and tree stumps placed in their naturally assumed locations are worth the effort for the value they add. Plants grow in and around shallow waters, so you should consider how to incorporate the gravel in your streambed and surrounding your edges. Again, to do it correctly, you need to know where plants grow naturally — on the inside curves, at the edges of waterfalls, along the slowly moving waters and at the shore where the water splashes. Keep in mind that you want this to look natural,

so you will likely landscape your stream with rocks and other materials several feet outside the flowing water's path, making the stream area complement the surroundings.

For your personal enjoyment, do not miss opportunities to make the stream feel at home with a bench, a birdhouse and statuary or pond lighting in locations throughout the stream. Puck lights do an amazing job at lighting up the streambed and couple nicely with spotlights properly hidden behind rocks and waterfalls to extend the evening hours of peace beside the meandering waters.

Finally, Enjoy Your Creation

Your perfect stream is now flowing beauty and life into a

previously dry world. It rises from the ground and returns naturally; between these two points, it dances around rocks, crashes down falls into cooling pools below and rises again with refreshing splashes of joy. It serves as a new oasis for flora and fauna, and above all else, it brings you a smile and a peaceful heart, calming the spirit with its beautiful sound and rejuvenating presence. It is as if it belonged there all along — and maybe it did. It just took you building it in order to bring it to life. 

Photos courtesy of Mark Maleski, president of Water Features of Texas. Building waterfalls and streams since 1999, he creates water features that are second to none in authenticity and "wow" factor.

About the Author

Shane Stefek is the president of Water Garden Gems, a koi and pond specialty retailer outside San Antonio, Texas. Water Garden Gems has been a leader in the koi and water garden industry for more than 25 years. Water Garden Gems annually hosts the longest-running koi show in Texas and is a premier supplier of imported Japanese koi and show-quality goldfish. Shane and his wife, Alona, along with their three sons, Nicholas, Peyton and Travis, work to help their customers create their own backyard oases as they enjoy sharing their knowledge and love for the hobby. With 15 years of pond-building experience, Shane shares his knowledge at numerous seminars throughout central Texas each year at clubs, businesses and schools. He also hosts club meetings and events at Water Garden Gems, where hobbyists can enjoy 3.5 acres of waterfalls, ponds, fountains and more than 25,000 gallons of koi and goldfish tanks.



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**Water Artisans of the Year Contest**

A new wave of competition is on its way for waterscape professionals around the country.

POND Trade magazine, a bimonthly publication catering to the pond and water feature industry, has announced the launch of its first annual Water Artisans of the Year contest.

The independent contest is intended to honor specific water feature construction projects completed by professional contractors in five distinct categories:

best overall design, best waterfall, best pondless, most naturalistic design and best renovation. Eligible projects must have been completed between Nov. 1, 2015 and Oct. 31, 2016.

"We're excited to create a new playing field for all the talented professionals in this thriving industry," said Lora Lee Gelles, publisher of POND Trade. "What we're focusing on here is craftsmanship and true artistry, so the playing field is wide open for all professionals across the spectrum."

In addition to promoting friendly competition, this year's contest will also raise awareness and donations for a charitable cause the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). The WWP was founded in 2003 to provide a variety of services and events for wounded veterans of the

United States military.

The entry fee for each submission is \$25, with all proceeds benefiting the WWP. Each entry donation should be accompanied by up to four photos of the candidate project, along with a brief write-up of no more than 50 words. Interested contestants may submit multiple entries for as many projects in as many categories as they wish.

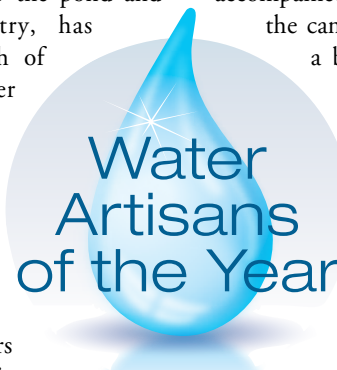
Gelles has assembled a panel of judges representing numerous specialties within the pond and water feature construction industry to review the submissions.

"I'll personally collect each submission and present it blindly to the judge panel," Gelles said. "To be as fair and impartial as possible, we're asking that contestants not include any brand names in the photos or descriptions."

Winners and honorable mentions will be named in each of the five categories, with a special award going to each winner.

The deadline for submissions is Nov. 1, 2016. No entry will be considered eligible for the contest without all three required components: the \$25 entry fee, up to four photos and a description of up to 50 words. Winners will be featured in the March/April 2017 issue of POND Trade.

To enter, visit www.pondtrademag.com/2016-water-artisan-contest.

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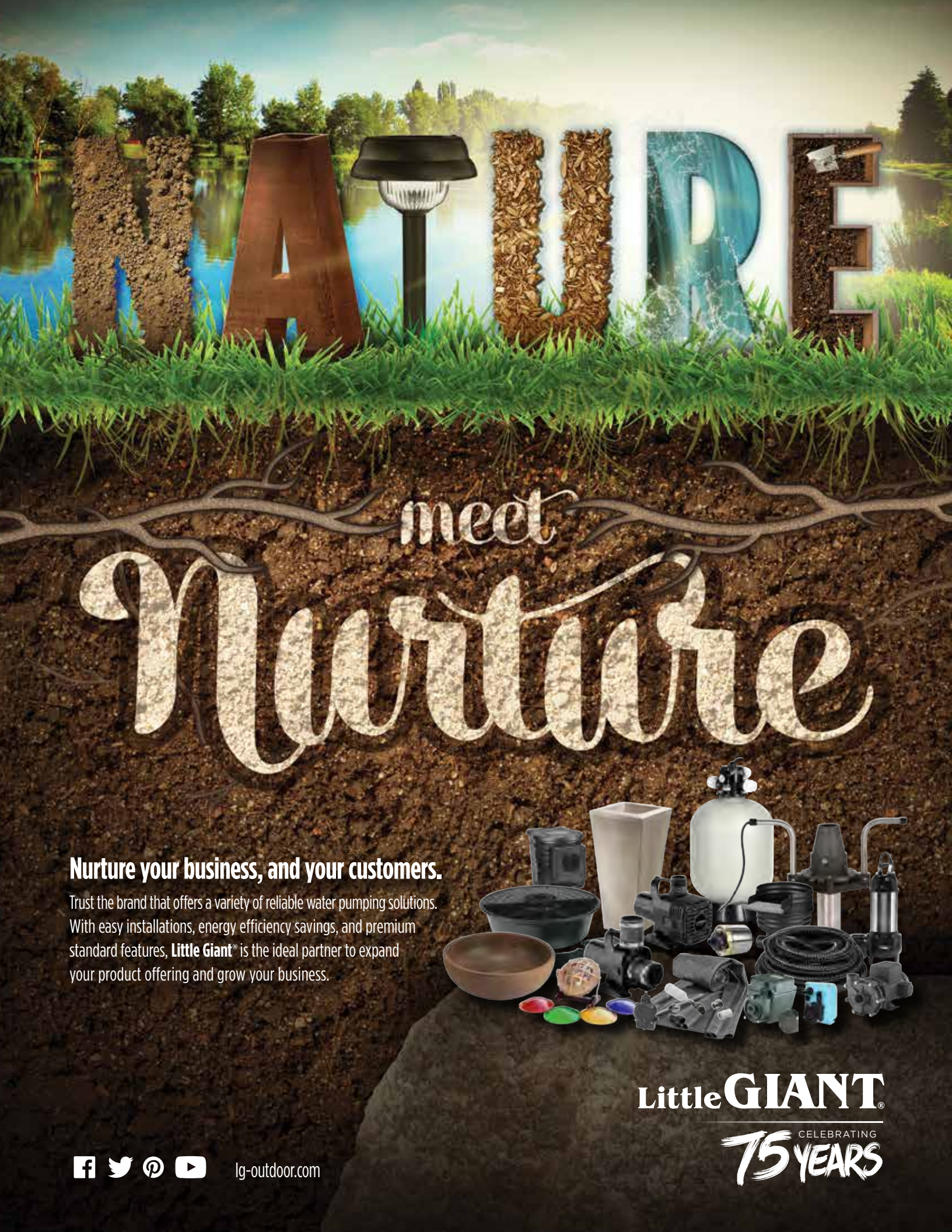
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