

Incorporating Koi Ponds in NW Gardens
Christine Charbonneau
APLDWA Annual Design Symposium, January 23, 2014

Contact: Chris Charbonneau, Washington Koi and Watergarden Society
chrischarbonneau@icloud.com 206 650 8249

- Koi are meant to be observed from above looking down.
- There is nothing natural about a garden pond which is stocked with ornamental fish. Like a Japanese garden, such an environment needs care and attention.
- Healthy koi live in good water. If a koi keeper keeps good water, their fish will thrive. Koi keepers must be willing to test their water, understand the results, buffer their water (usually in the Seattle area, and most koi keepers use baking soda) and clean their filters.
- Plan for 500 gallons per fish. Myth has it that fish will grow to fit the size of their environments, which is not totally true. Koi which have large fish genes will become large fish.
- It will only take a couple of years for a six inch fish to become a twenty-six inch fish. If people don't plan for pond to be over 1000 gallons, they would be better served to put goldfish into their pond. Pond Comets are a good choice. Shebunkins are pretty, but are hard to see in the water. Ornamental goldfish are insufficiently hardy for Northwest Winters.
- It is possible to starve an animal to make it smaller than it would normally grow to be, but then it will neither be healthy or beautiful, and animal abuse is not ethical.
- Koi are happiest at 77 degrees F but can survive in 35-95 degree water. In the Pacific Northwest, plan to put the pond where it gets sun in order to prevent the water from being perpetually too cold.
- Waterfalls and streams into a pond must have separate shutoffs from the rest of the filtration. Water that falls through frigid air becomes super-cooled in winter, causing health issues for Koi.
- Ponds with Koi in them must be oxygenated at all times. Cold water naturally holds more oxygen than warm. Turning off the power to a pond on a hot day can cause all of the fish to suffocate. It is useful if ponds have back-up systems to avoid this kind of tragedy.
- Koi need water which is kept free of pesticides, heavy metals, poisonous plants and stray voltage. Avoid planning a pond which gets runoff from a hillside or a roofline.
- In freezing temperatures, a hole in the ice must be maintained in the pond for gas exchange, or the koi will suffocate. If you discover your pond frozen over, place a tea kettle which has been boiled on the ice, (tie it on, or you will be fishing for it later) and melt through the ice layer. DO NOT break the ice by concussive force. That force will travel through the water and cause physical damage to the Koi.

Recommended Books:

Waddington, Peter. *Koi Kichi*. Gardners Books, 1999.

Waddington, Peter. *Koi 2 Kichi*. Nishikigoi International Ltd, 2005.