

C O U N T R Y Q U A R T E R S



@JamieMorisonDesigns

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WELCOME

Welcome to Country Quarters!...

Country Quarters is a lifestyle and design magazine that celebrates both Celtic and country life. There is a deliberate focus on enjoying simple things fuelled by kindness, creativity, hard work and an ardent pursuit of knowledge.

Though at times it may be a stretch to see how all articles will relate to design, they do in some way. To me everything we experience in our daily lives feeds design and its final product. Even the most insignificant event or piece of knowledge can be stored away and later used to contribute substantially to something meaningful. An amassing of many small bits creates an overall masterpiece.

This magazine is purposely a little bit different. It does not reveal what the articles will be on the cover. There is a specific reason for this and it is not to be tricky. I have structured it this way in the hope that it provides a surprise much like a gift would and gives you something to look forward to. It is based on one of my favourite experiences. When I was a child we would often go to a small local restaurant. At this little village restaurant there sat an ornately decorated cardboard box on the end of the counter. This box had several rows of perforated circles that for one dollar bought you the chance to push your hand through a hole. Behind each of the many circles lay your gift. I still have my gift, a brass lantern, even today. The anticipation created by not knowing what your treat might be was more than half of the fun. I kept this gift not because it was worth a lot, but because I remember the excitement I felt having this opportunity.

Hopefully it teaches you something new or deepens your existing knowledge on a particular subject. I hope as well that it will give you simple ways to enjoy your everyday life no matter what your situation and give you something to look forward to.

Best, Jamie



Jamie Morison
Publisher/Designer



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KOI



One of the many places I find happiness is at the side of a koi pond. Watching the swimming patterns of the many coloured fish provides an infinite number of fascinating designs for me. Little did I know before installing a koi pond what an important feature it would be. It allows you to escape for a moment and be transported into a different space.

Koi are extremely curious, sociable and also quite intelligent. In time you begin to recognize personalities that are specific to each fish. They are very “dog-like” and can even be trained to do tricks, such as going through hoops under water. Most people may think of koi as simply fish but the reason I liken them to the family dog is because they are curious, friendly, sociable and trusting, you quickly learn that these fish each have their own personalities and can be very entertaining. One koi owner trained her fish to swim through hoops. They can be trained to come when called, unlike my independent minded dachshund named Sophie. Even the environment in which they live is fascinating. It's not merely water,



but a delicate ecosystem that is influenced by the heat and cold, plants, number of fish and more.

The word “koi” in the Japanese language means, “carp”, but it is also a homophone for the words “love and affection”. This would explain the preponderance of koi tattoos I suppose, of which I do not have. The Japanese also view them as a symbol of good fortune, luck and perseverance as they will



swim upstream with dogged determination. Buddhist's similarly view their strength of purpose under adverse circumstances while swimming upstream as a sign of determination. We Scottish view the koi as a symbol of stubbornness (just kidding). Alternatively, seeing a koi swim downstream is a sign of bad luck to come. Koi, or carp, originally were dark coloured fish who being extremely hardy, were able to live in many different climates and water conditions. Thousands of years ago the Chinese began to breed them encouraging their colour mutations. In the 1820s the common carp were also being bred for colour in Japan. One of the most notable colour variations is the red-and-white or kohaku, and by the 20th century a number of colour patterns had been established. But it wasn't until 1914 that the rest of the world became aware of these beautiful colour variations in the koi at the world's fair.

The longevity of koi varies, but in general they will reach their full size at about fifteen years of age, with the possibility of living up to 47 years. So buy your koi in your twenties! I once heard of a scarlet koi named "Hanako" who was famous for having lived two hundred and twenty-six years! Hanako had several owners over her lifetime and the last was Dr. Komei Kashihara. It is important to know that Hanako's age was based on a detailed examination of her scales in 1966. She died finally in 1977.

The size of koi is also a big part of their allure. They can reach up to two to three feet in length with some species growing up to six feet. We did have two especially large koi that were with us for many years. We took them home in the fall when they were passed over by everyone else koi shopping during the season and gave them a good home. They were the friendliest of all our fish and they

were about eighteen inches long. Both were unfortunately found in the grass this Spring and we were heartbroken. There was no obvious explanation as to why this happened, but the point was they were gone and we were very saddened by it.

One of the reasons koi are sometimes found outside the pond is due to spawning. Koi reproduce by spawning once the females reach a certain length. Koi and goldfish are not one and the same as they were developed from different species of carp. By the way, comets, or goldfish, reproduce constantly and will overpopulate your available pond space very quickly. It is extremely hard to separate the goldfish from the koi once this happens. It is possible for koi and goldfish to interbreed, but their offspring will be sterile. As cute as they are...keep goldfish out of your pond! When female koi spawn they lay thousands of eggs in a single spawning that will then be fertilized by one or more males. The result are baby koi or "fry". Although thousands of eggs are laid by the female, many do not survive as they can be eaten by frogs, other koi, and animals. Even the temperature of the water can destroy the fry. The water temperature should be between 59 - 77 °F or the fry will not develop properly. Look for spawning behaviour in late spring as once there is a little vegetation the females can hide their eggs for safety and once hatched, the fry too can hide amongst the greenery. Once the Spring pond is on its way check it regularly, especially during spawning season to see if any fish are trapped in planted bog areas or have leaped out of the pond and are stranded on the grassy areas. You will sometimes find koi in the grass as a result of the females attempt to get away from the over-exuberant males who chase them by bumping into them during the spawning season. Some things never change, do they?!



You can figure out which koi are the females by watching this behaviour in the spring. Another indicator of the sex is that females tend to look, well... more feminine. Their bodies are rounder and their pectoral fins and fins in general tend to be smaller. The males in contrast are more elongated in shape and their pectoral fins are more pointed and overall the fins on males are larger. One last way to tell if a koi is a male are the gill plates. You can see a rough texture on the gill plates in the older larger males which is not visible on the females.

Let me preface this next paragraph by saying that I love birds. I feed them all winter and throughout the year, but I hate when anything is killed and this brings me to my nemesis, the heron. Now in isolation, I love the heron. They are beautiful, elegant, a perfect example of appealing aesthetic design at its best. But not when they kill my koi for fun. Then you see me, gape-mouthed at my back window one moment, and running

wildly outdoors, flapping my arms making a growling sound the next. Not exactly a picture of poise. The heron very often will poach koi for the pure fun of it. That's what makes the attack so horrible. They do not eat the fish for sustenance, they instead spear it with their long beak and leave it there with a single puncture wound. This is one way to play detective in order to determine what may have happened to your fish. If there is a single hole, it is a heron, if there is a bite, it is a raccoon, skunk, or something of the sort. No marks at all could be spawning or simple fooling about by a careless fish who flips themselves accidentally out of the pond and then gets stuck on dry land. No matter how the loss occurs, it's always disheartening as large koi are expensive. Also as one gets to know their different personalities, a closer relationship as a pet owner occurs. Avoiding the pesky heron is difficult (looking like a fool as I do chasing them doesn't seem to deter them), but using a net strewn across the top of the pond, a decorative metal grate used in the same manner or a sensor on your garden house to spray away predators might work. Pond stores will attempt to sell you the bronzed heron statue and tell you that by placing it near the pond's edge, it will deter any herons from stopping by. Apparently, herons will not invade another herons territory, real or otherwise. I fell for this, it did not work. I actually think I saw the heron snickering by the pond at the sight of this statue while I waved my arms maniacally. There is one thing that will absolutely decrease your risk of heron poachers. Build your pond with straight sides and a completely flat bottom and at a depth of at least three to six feet. The reason this works is that heron's need to "wade-in" to spear your fish. So the multi-tiered ponds that gradually get deeper from a foot on the first tier to two feet and so on to the third and fourth tier are

the worst. These types of ponds are best for water flowers only.

Think through your design very carefully in order to protect your pets. If you want some form of overhangs above your pond make certain that they are high above the surface of the water as having a nice perch makes it very easy to snatch the koi. Some people string wires above the koi pond to deter herons but I think a lovelier choice is a pergola, or even better some shade trees that block the herons view. Be sure to consider the pros and cons of different trees and their effect on the water. Avoid using pine, oak, or fruit bearing trees. Their needles, fruits, and nuts will be bad for your pond water. If you do choose some shade trees, be aware that the falling flower buds or autumn leaves can easily block your filters which can be a very big problem. If you take a little time, a low cost solution is to simply use your net again just below the surface of your pond during the periods of time that the trees



are dropping their leaves or flowers. The other interesting fact about why shade trees benefit your pond is that they help to prevent sunburn in the lighter coloured koi!

The koi's bright colours lure not only us, but many predators as well. Predators that you need to strategize against are birds such as herons (which you know about) and kingfishers. Mammals such as raccoons, badgers, hedgehogs, foxes and your neighbours cat who is always up to no good! For the longest time I "called" my koi by



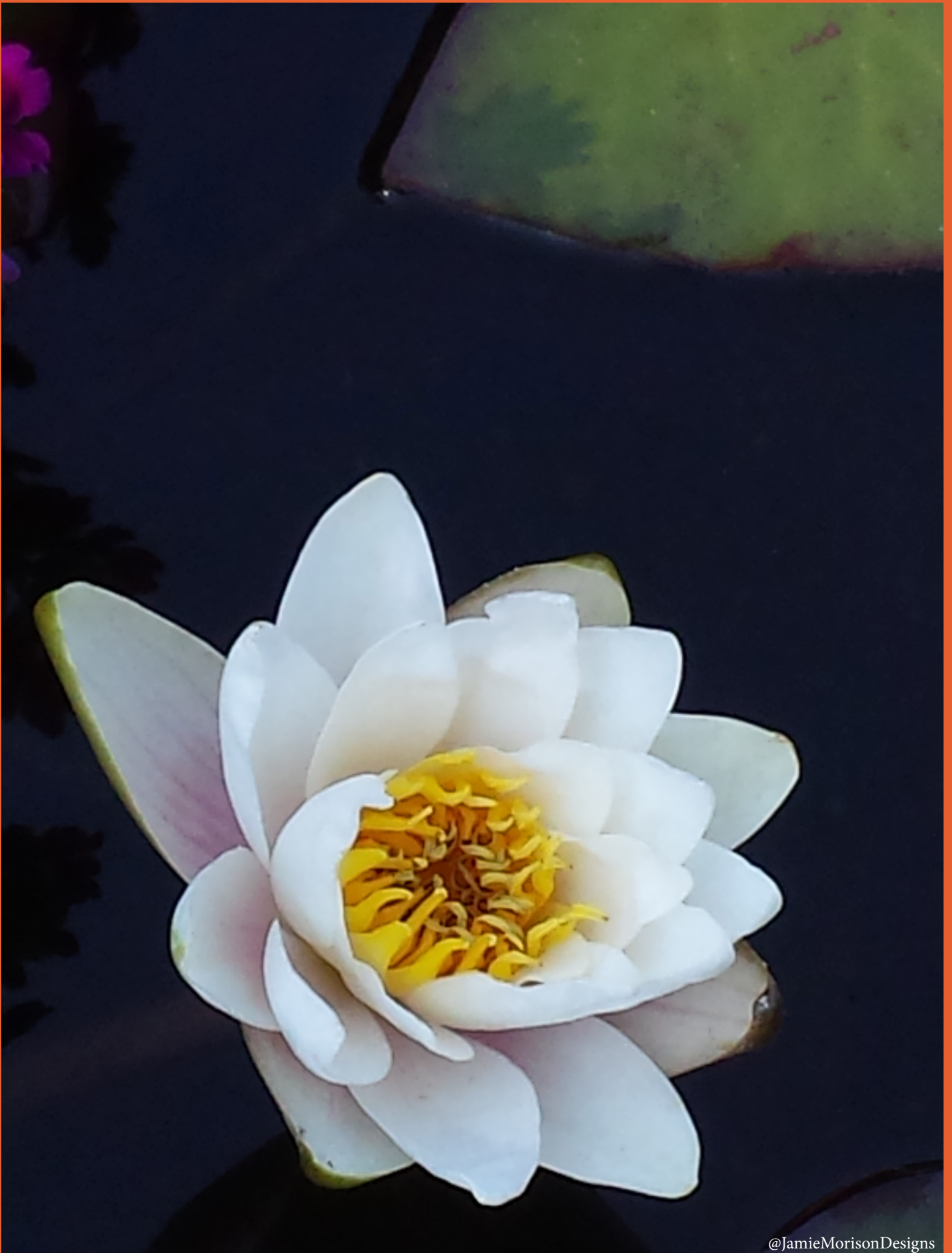


tapping or stirring up the water with my hand until Sean Cudmore (Pond Creations by Sean), our koi expert, advised me not to do this as this is how raccoons lure the curious and friendly koi into their grasp. If you do not take the time to plan and think about its construction, your pond will turn into the neighbourhood fish market and be cleaned out. Creating an underwater hiding spot, or grotto, for the fish to be able to escape is also a very good idea. You can easily do this by laying a flat rock securely on top of four smaller rocks creating an underwater room for your koi. Leaving approximately a foot or more in height would be best.

As I mentioned before but will say again because it is so important, if you live in an area where you have warm summers (which is almost everywhere) your pond should be at least three feet in depth or more and provide some shade; otherwise you will have fish soup as your fish will get stressed and sick. If you have cold winters (snow), your pond should be at least four and a half to five feet deep so that your water does not freeze solid or not leave enough ample space for the koi to live under ice. In this environment you will also need a small pond heater or a bubbler whose job is to ensure that the ice does not completely cover the top of the pond. If there is no hole kept continuously open all winter the ammonia levels build up in the water over winter and kill the koi.

The other important point to tell you about is that I have found that when building a pond,

it is best to hire two separate contractors, one for masonry and the other as a koi pond expert. The koi pond experts requirements are foremost and should be the driver of your projected plans. Determine what his needs are first and think of the masonry second. This is not always the case, as Sean, who oversees our pond, has a great sense of construction as well. But in general masons and landscapers are specialists within their fields and even if they tell you that they have installed plenty of koi ponds, they are not, repeat after me, “they are not pond experts”. Likewise people who know everything about the ecosystem of a koi pond should not be attempting to build supporting walls out of blue stone or travertine. Masonry too is a very specialized field and they should be focused on the proper installation of hardscape materials. The laying of the liner should be done by the pond expert with the help of the mason. Very often with rubber liners you will have unsightly folds that result if you do not have an expert who has worked with this material and knows the nature of it. Gunite ponds require an additional two to three months of time factored into the construction schedule as the water must acclimate before any koi can be added. The pond expert is just that: the expert. He will know what liner, filter, pumps, plants, fish, food, additives, and so on you will need in order to be successful. When your water is green with algae during the first year or first warm week in Spring thereafter, he will come in with his magic cape and know exactly what to do. By the way, although it may not look very nice this green water will not hurt the fish. The climbing spring temperatures can cause the green algae to blossom. Installing a UV light that becomes part of the filtration process is a terrific way to address the “green water issue”. It’s very low-tech and the bulb only needs to be changed perhaps once a



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season. The process involves the green pond water simply flowing over the UV light after which it becomes nice and clear and remains so as long as the filtration system is running. It is well worth the

investment.

The other thing that you must include in your plans for a koi pond are plants. Water lilies are beautiful and are available as annuals or perennials even in cold climates. Their range of colours are enticing but they alone are not sufficient to keep your koi pond clean. Buy these, but in addition, buy water hyacinth and mint. Both are readily available at any aquaculture shop. Of all the plants available, these two are the most beneficial. Keep in mind though that the mint, which is a perennial, is very invasive unless you cull it or create a man-made barrier in the design of your pond in order to restrict its growth. It is the best plant to clean your water, plus it smells very nice when you touch it which is an added bonus. The second plant which is the water hyacinth is also very effective, but slightly less so. This annual has a beautiful lilac coloured flower which compliments and adds variety to your ponds planting scheme. Be aware that your koi are very curious and smart. They will root around in your submerged lily pots on the floor of your pond like little piglets foraging for food. As a result they can wreak havoc on the plants. Try to



ensure your pots are securely weighted so as to avoid this problem. One other question you may think of is whether your lilies will reach the surface of the water if they are at the bottom of a five foot deep pond and how to place them. The answer is that they will grow right up to the surface and will survive the winter if they are of the perennial variety. There is one drawback to having the beautiful water lily in your pond, you must get into the water to place them and secure them. I would not use a pole with any type of point as a hole in your liner (which can be punctured very easily) would mean losing all the water in the pond and thereby killing your fish. If this occurred the whole pond would have to be drained to make the repair, the fish would have to go into a temporary holding tank and most likely get stressed and possibly ill or die if you had the time to get them out at all. One final gardening tip is to make sure that absolutely no herbicides or pesticides are used anywhere near your pond. The medium can accidentally land in the pond while it is being broadcasted from a cart or will enter the pond through run-off during rain storms.

One of the greatest pleasures of having koi is the development of trust between you and the fish. When else can you have fish eat right out of your hand or swim to you when they recognize you? It is an exceptionally magical experience. Koi will eat almost anything, but that doesn't mean it's all good for them. Koi are omnivorous, which means that they eat both meat and vegetation. The two most important things to remember about feeding are: don't feed too much and don't feed if the water temperature is below 50 °F in either the spring or the fall. Doing so can kill your fish. If your pond is deep enough and you keep a hole open at all times in the ice by using a pond heater your koi can live over the

winter, but these cold temperatures are obviously harder on your fish than say a perfect climate of 70 °F. You always want to make sure that there is a hole in the ice in winter as the ammonia level can get too high killing your fish and likewise a lack of oxygen can have the same result. This being said, absolutely **DO NOT** try to chop a hole in the ice with an axe or shovel or with the heel of your boot. The vibration from these actions will kill your fish. Use a hot sauce pan to melt ice when necessary. I met a man who had sixteen very large koi that he had cared for for the past twenty years. As a result of not keeping a hole in the ice and then attempting to chop through it, he lost every single one. He was devastated as you cannot get the fish nor all those years of hard work and diligent care back. A similar scenario can also happen in the warmer months. Our pond expert Sean, told me of a story where the owner of a koi pond with sizeable fish decided to chop down several trees on his property. the vibration of the sections of trees falling resulted in every last fish dying.

Below 50 °F your koi's immune system shuts off because they are ectothermic creatures (when something depends on an external source or sources to control its body temperature). For koi this means that their



body temperature is determined by the temperature of the water that they are in. During the cold winter months they will float at the floor of the pond in suspended animation, barely moving. If you live in a cold climate but your koi pond is in a greenhouse where the water remains above 50 °F, your koi will continue to be active during winter and as well, continue to grow more rapidly than koi who have to remain outdoors in the winter. In this instance, the water temperature is over 50 °F (but always measure the temperature with your pond thermometer) so it is fine to keep feeding them.

Koi will constantly forage for food and as mentioned before, will eat anything. They have very large flexible jaws which can be very daunting at first if you are feeding them or have your feet dangling in the pond! In the larger koi you can actually see right down their throats. At the back of these throats are their pharyngeal teeth. Cue Jaws music. But even more interesting than that, koi do not have stomachs. Their food is digested through their intestines which is why you must feed fry or young koi a pellet of food that is high in protein as their intestinal tracts are very short and thus less effective at absorbing nutrients needed for growth and health. The most important thing to remember about feeding your koi is to show self-restraint and to not over feed





them. Over feeding can cause a whole host of problems such as obesity which will shorten their lifespan. Mulum sits on the floor of your pond and consists of fish waste, plant debris and

uneaten food which rots in the pond when not consumed. The result is an unhealthy environment for the fish and will cause them to be ill due to poor water quality.

The general rule is to only feed as much food to your koi as they can consume in a few minutes. I admit that I am guilty of giving too much food and the koi really do stop eating after few minutes and it simply floats on the surface until it sinks to the bottom wasted.

As mentioned, you can feed your koi a variety of things but some just as treats. Make sure that you remove all the shells or casings that the food may come in. An example would be peas that need to have their pods removed as koi cannot digest the pods and this could harm them. Examples of the food that you can serve are varied, but all should be cut into small bite-sized pieces so that they can digest it more readily. Some possible fun foods or treats are cooked and chopped spaghetti noodles, cheerios, defrosted shelled shrimp (a treat), chopped lettuce, shelled peas, brown bread that is rolled into tiny balls, watermelon, garlic that is both in pieces and sliced and oranges without the rind. Again this list is considered fun food or snacks, but your koi should have pellets that you can buy from your pond expert or pet store, which are specifically formulated for your koi to keep them healthy. Essentially

there are two types of pellets that are specific to the time of year that you will be feeding them. The spring and fall pellets are heavier in wheat germ which is easier to digest for the koi's slow digestive system during the cold weather or water under 50 °F. During the summer, when water temperature is very warm, the feeding pellets used are higher in protein. These high protein pellets are also good for small koi or fry in order to provide the nutrients they need to grow and be healthy. Remember that these special pellets are only used in the Summer. In addition there are also special foods that contain beta-carotene and large amounts of spirulina algae and shrimp that enhance your koi's colour. These are natural agents that do not hurt your fish.

As far as the health of koi, they are generally a very hearty fish but you must buy your stock from a reputable seller so that you do not buy fish that may carry parasites that will affect the other fish in your pond. Watch water quality of your pond because they can become ill with disease as a result of this and/or the before mentioned parasites. Do not ignore the water quality. Koi are expensive as larger fish. A six to eight inch koi may cost around \$200.00 each. If you purchase ten, you have a significant investment to protect in the water. As a direct result of this investment, you tend to bond very quickly. In very hot summer months it is common for water to evaporate from the pond. This water needs to be replenished and be treated with a chemical to soften it so as not to harm your fish. The



other really important thing is that you need to have a filter that will run continuously when your pond is open for the season. Part of this system is a spillway which drops water, such as with a waterfall or fountain spray so that the water in the pond has its oxygen replenished. This is extremely important to have. Your koi pond will need regular maintenance much like the schedule a swimming pool would have. Most problems are likely to occur in the first year as the pond is trying to get itself established, and these problems are typically caused by overfeeding.

When your koi wake in the very early Spring when the water is still below 50 °F and they are coming out of dormancy, they are very much at risk for illness. As they begin to stir out of their period of winter dormancy spent in the depths of the pond, they are very susceptible to illnesses such as bacterial infections, which can rapidly overwhelm their weakened immune systems. Once the water temperature increases, fish regain their appetites and become better able to fight infections. This surge in appetite and the resulting increase in waste products cause a rise in ammonia levels in the water, so now is a good time to maintain and service filtration equipment. The beneficial bacteria in biological filters are inactive during cold weather, and such filters may need to be reseeded with bacterial cultures. The addition of zeolite, a chemical that absorbs ammonia directly from the water, may also be beneficial until the filter is fully functioning again.

These are two final things not to put in your pond. Rocks are not a good idea on the floor of your pond as the ammonia level goes up significantly as the fish waste

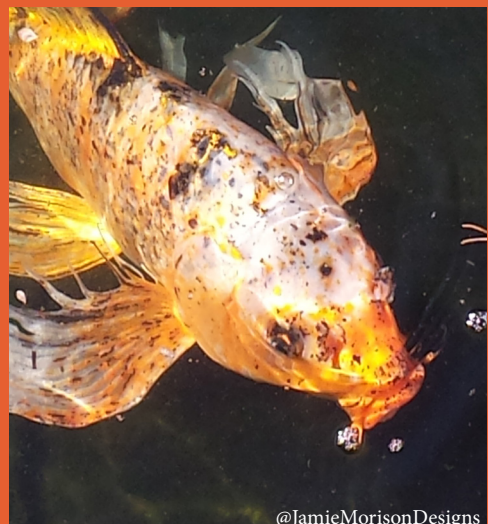
remains trapped between all the rocks. The final thing are turtles. But...they are so cute and how can one have a pond without also having turtles you say. Turtles, are a favourite of mine as well but they should not be invited into your koi pond as their sharp claws will quickly make holes in you liner and cause you a lot of expense and headache.

Truthfully, having a koi pond is worth the effort. Not only is it rewarding to see your pets floating by blissfully but there is also an element of science and a little engineering involved not to mention landscape design which can all be enjoyable in and of themselves. There are many ways to achieve the pond of your dreams and these general tips are meant to help you avoid some of the problems I have encountered through the years. Others may have experienced similar or different problems and found other solutions that worked for them in addition to these. Hopefully this information provides encouragement to take the leap and try something new!

Many thanks to Country Gardens of Ipswich MA for allowing me to take the lovely photos of their fish.



floor of your pond as the ammonia level goes up significantly as the fish waste





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BLUING



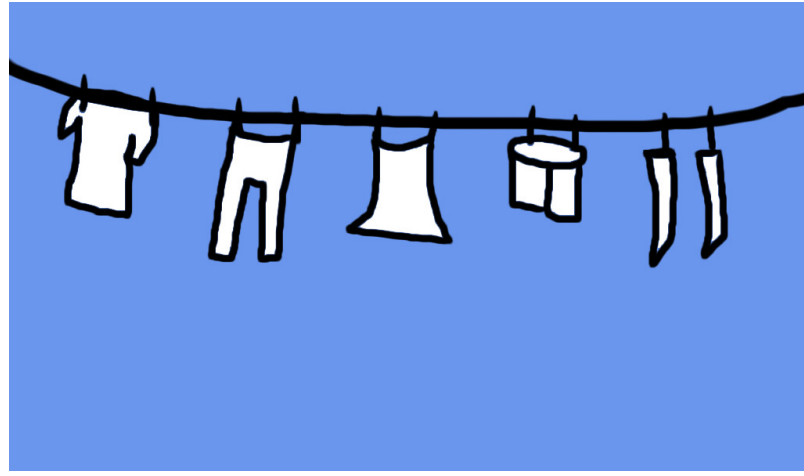
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Have you ever been walking down the street behind an elderly woman and her poodle, both of which are sporting blue hair? You may wonder what course of events occurred simultaneously to the both of them that lead to that curious result. Could they have accidentally walked under a painter's ladder just as a full bucket of blue paint spilled down on them and after hours of trying to scrub it out, this was the best it could be? Or could she have possibly convinced her hairdresser to sneak the both of them in after hours in order to have matching hair colours? The answer is that she may have been a bit heavy handed with the bluing bottle. But what is bluing anyhow? Have you heard of it? I had not until I came across an interesting old bottle while tidying up my grandmother's house. The bottle was hand-blown with a red cork stopper and an indigo coloured fluid in it. At first it looked like ink, although I wondered why my grandmother would have bought so much when she was not in the printing trade. Also, the consistency looked thinner than ink. Want to take another guess? The bottle had the embossed words, "Mrs. Stewart's Bluing" around the shoulders. Bluing is a blue fluid that is still used primarily to make your white laundry whiter. Over time white can yellow and in the past women used this product to keep everything looking fresh and clean. But over the last 132 years, it has also been used for many other interesting and curious things as well such as marking ski race courses, drug testing, relieving insect bite pain, helping to detect plumbing leaks and for use in magic salt crystal gardens. Of course, older women would use it to brighten their white hair! If it worked for her, she may have thought, then why not fido too! Sometimes they were a bit over-zealous and their hair may have come out blue. This was bad enough, but considering you could also use it on your dog's white hair

as well, this could be quite a sight!

In the early 1800's, a travelling salesman named Al Stewart and his family were busily concocting this very bluing fluid in their kitchen from a recipe that he had come across. As he made his usual rounds as a travelling salesman, he tried selling it and found that he had some success. To his satisfaction the product was taking off which meant that he needed to find a manufacturer to meet the demand of his sales and also to increase the volume of product that he could supply. Serendipitously he bumped into a young gentleman named Luther Ford, who had been working as a silk salesman and had decided to start a Five and Ten Cent Bazar. He carried a variety of wholesale items, fireworks being one of them, but unfortunately his business was not thriving as he had hoped. Stewart and Ford's paths crossed after Ford had just experienced a nasty fireworks explosion at his Five and Ten Cent Bazar. Considering the long term risks and occupational hazards of his work, he decided that the bluing business might be the way to go and as a result, he purchased the right to "Mrs. Stewart's Bluing". The first documented sale was in 1883. Before the invention of the automatic washing machine, women of the house had to have three large kettles or baths available in order to do their laundry. The first sat on the stove and was filled with hot sudsy water and laundered thoroughly. The clothes were then rinsed twice in the second kettle and white linens were then dipped briefly into the third kettle briefly which contained cool water and just enough Mrs. Stewart's Bluing to make the water a sky blue. The linens would then be hung to dry. Today you can simply add a wee bit to the wash cycle or final rinse cycle to brighten up your whites. Should you add too much accidentally, it can be removed by completely submerging your laundered goods

in a 5 gallon airtight container. A solution of a 1/2 cup of household ammonia mixed with 1 quart of cold water will reverse the problem. Bluing is not a dye, but nonetheless one needs to only use a few drops per load of laundry to see an improvement and, although it has been done in the past, I would suggest keeping it away from your dog's hair as well! Since that first sale in 1883, Mrs. Stewart's Bluing has been headed by variety of persons, but the formula for the product has remained the same since its conception in Al Stewart's kitchen.



Wee Bits of Information

Did you know that the image on the bottle of Mrs. Stewart's Bluing is not the wife of founder Al Stewart, but instead an image of his mother-in-law. In desperation he grabbed a photograph of his mother-in-law off the fireplace mantle as his wife refused to have her image on the products label. In the 1970's, advertising thought that an image of a saucier Mrs. Stewart would be more appealing to their woman's lib consumer, they were wrong. They were inundated by heaps of mail from outraged consumers wanting the image of the old Mrs. Stewart back. Although the image was in black and white print, I wonder if she too may have had a blue hue to her hair?