

Business Barometer April 2009

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Small Features Increase in Popularity

Water garden designer and contractor, in Erie, Colo.
Business is fair. We are off to a decent start this year.

Clients want smaller water features than in the past. I could attribute it to the economy, but people seem to want to spend their money. They are more cautious, though, about how they spend their money.

We are working on about eight installs right now. Normally they make up about 70 percent of our business, and the rest comes from pond maintenance. I am looking forward to a good year; I think we will do fine.

Business Holds Steady, Customers DIY

Pond design and construction business in Lancaster, Ky.

Our pond business and retail store are about the same as the past couple of years. Construction is doing well. Installs account for 45-55 percent of our business. It won't be an exceptional year, but we plan to hold steady.

More people want to learn about do-it-yourself projects and rainwater harvesting systems. The Aquascape RainXchange system is a big hit for us.

Clients want to upgrade their landscapes, and I expect to see this turn into a trend. We are following up on contacts from years past to increase customers.

Business Picks Up, Installs Do Not

Designer and installer in Dallas, Texas

Business, in general, is picking up, but installs are not. Normally we do one install a month, but we only had one install in 2008.

Service calls increased in the past couple of weeks. We visit about 75 ponds and 28 swimming pools a week.

We continue to advertise in a local Dallas magazine, but most of our business comes from word of mouth.

Quiet Year, Quiet Winter

Landscape garden center in Grandin, N.D.

Business remains pretty quiet, because it is winter. Last year was not good.

We do not install, but we do offer water garden features. We have not sold any ponds because I have not had time. We keep an in-store pond display, but it has not generated much business lately.

Landscaping, on the other hand, is up. The most popular items include bedding plants and trees. We expect to see things pick up in spring.

Installs Slow, Consumables Steady

Contact and retailer in Roseville, Calif.

The wet winter slowed foot traffic in the store, but service and construction are keeping us busy. Consumables, such as cold-water beneficial bacteria and algaecides, are selling well.

The store used to be retail only, but to diversify and keep busy in the slowing economy, we added a service and construction crew. We booked a couple of installation jobs along with services and cleanings. These make up 30 to 40 percent of our business.

We have a good in-store shopping customer base, so we are marketing new services to them. We had a good year in 2008, and we are cautiously optimistic for 2009.