

Business Barometer August 2010

Water Garden News regularly surveys pond and water garden companies about their business climate and sales trends. Respondents are granted anonymity.

August 1, 2010

Phenomenal Sales This Year

A full-service retail and construction company in Fox Lake, Ill.

Business is phenomenal. We're up 32 percent from this time last year. We average about 60 ponds a year, and we're going to exceed that this year.

Retail customers are buying a little bit of everything. I credit our success in our sales to our in-store displays. We have five display ponds and five display waterfalls.

We expect business to increase again next year. We've done a lot of partnerships with other businesses to build in patios and other features.

Plants, Consumables Stay Steady

A garden center in Bloomington, Ill.

There is a downslide on people building new ponds, but current owners are keeping up their ponds. Chemicals remain steady and fish are selling pretty good.

Waterlilies always sell, along with water hyacinth and water lettuce. Cattails are big this year.

We added Facebook this year. When we get in new products, we post it on Facebook. We get two or three comments with each posting, and people come in.

Business Unsteady, Sales Down

A pond and water garden retailer in Casselberry, Fla.

Our business is in an up-and-down cycle. People are buying necessities, not wants. Sales are way down this year compared to last year.

We're doing more direct phone calls and improving customer service. We're talking to people to find out what they're doing and why they're not spending money. Mostly customers are sitting tight.

When customers come in, I try to give them good service and find out what else they need now and in the future.

Maintenance picked up a bit so we get calls from owners who want to know how to clean up the mess themselves. I do my best to answer their questions so they keep my name in their mind when they need products. Customer service is key.

Builds Stalled, Maintenance OK

A contractor in Pikeville, Ky.

Business improved until May/June, then things went down. July is better.

We mostly do contract work, and new builds remain down. We carry maintenance products, but owners are holding off until they must maintain their features.

I should have done more advertising. I plan to increase our online presence and get into billboards.

E-mail Alerts Bring in Customers

A pet and pond shop in Arroyo Grande, Calif.

Business is comparable to last year. The first couple of months were better, and tropical fish pulled us through winter.

Plants and other livestock are selling well.

There are fewer big projects this year. People are maintaining their current features. They buy food and algae control.

We developed an e-mail list to alert customers about new products and livestock shipments. We cut back on mail flyers and use the Internet more. There has been a noticeable response with the e-mail list; it has been very well received with no complaints.

We also offer a discount card/membership. The "Fish Card" costs \$25 a year for the discounts. This promotion helps with store loyalty. We also working with contractors and give them discounts to work with us.