

## Business Barometer January 2006

**These responses came from a Jan. 10, 2006, survey and originally appeared in the January 2006 issue of Water Garden News.**

Posted: January 1, 2006

**Blooming All Over**  
Garden center in North Little Rock, Ark.

This isn't the busy season for water gardening, but when it is, business is pretty good. We actually have a pond with a waterfall, and we have a lot of those plants in it, growing. So that's a really good tool for customers to see and get ideas.

But we do well with the grasses, reeds and the flowering plants. In fact, we're sitting down with the bulb man right now trying to get some new stuff in. That's really taken off this last summer and spring, and we're now branching out and bringing in more varieties of water plants. We were looking at different water lilies and grasses.

We don't sell the liners or anything, but we do sell the plants. I haven't seen any trends, but people look for what they don't already have as far as plants. We sell some statuary, like the little spitters.

**Phantom Closed Sign**  
Fountain and statuary retailer in Sarasota, Fla.

Business has been lousy, very bad since November. I absolutely can't figure it out. We were doing great. I mean, comparing day to day, week to week, month to month to last year right through November to Thanksgiving. And then the day after Thanksgiving until today, it's like we put up a "Closed" sign. It's deadly. I can't attribute it to anything. We've done nothing differently, and we have more inventory. I don't know why.

And it's glorious out. It's 75 degrees and sunny every day. I just can't figure it out. I know it's not just me, another store north of me and another store east of me that have similar stuff to me, the three of us are complaining.

Theoretically, March, April, May and June are my busiest months; they're Christmas for me. That's when people come out of the woodwork and start doing their gardening. So we'll see how it goes then.

**Ponds Run Their Course**  
Full-service nursery and farm in Keizer, Ore.

Business is getting less and less and, in fact, is part of our yearly discussion. It's almost like big statuary and so forth ran its course, and everybody that wanted a big fountain or a big statue got it. And we get that feeling on the water gardening. It's like everybody that's wanted to put a major pond in or even a small pond in has done it, and I know demographic-wise, even with all the new people coming into town, we wrestle with what it is.

We've got real strict land-use planning here in Oregon, and so urban growth boundaries are set up and you've got to infill and absolutely build out every inch before you expand out urban growth boundaries. So all the lot sizes are real restricted and many backyards are so small that you can hardly get a badminton set up, let alone put a pond in. So we're not sure whether that's contributing to the downward spiral of things, or if we're just not marketing well enough.

But everybody in water gardening here in western Oregon from Portland to Eugene has sort of experienced the same thing, so that's where we're at right now.

The one thing we're thinking of expanding more is getting back into the small off-the-deck or patio water features, not

necessarily in-ground. Backyards are getting so small, so with both breadwinners working in the family, they have time to do the maintenance.