

## Gravel Versus No-gravel Pond Bottoms

Friday, September 4, 2009, 7:30 p.m., EDT

When I attended Pondapalooza in Portland, Ore., some years back, it was a pond and water garden builder's heaven. We got to network with leading manufacturers as well as other pond and water garden builder's from across the nation.

The highlight of the event for me was to witness Greg Wittstock, founder of Aquascape Inc., and Chic Kelty, then-owner of Savio Engineering Inc., engage in a formal debate about whether or not to put gravel on the bottom of a pond or water garden. Kelty's argument was that gravel on the bottom of a pond or water garden leads to a stagnation zone.

Kelty said organic matter sinks and gets trapped in the stagnation zone. Reduced water circulation in the stagnation zone leads to dissolved oxygen deficiencies and organic matter purification. The end result, Kelty said, is the release of poison gases and disease organisms, leading to poor fish health.

Wittstock said his company's thousands of pond and water garden jobs included gravel on the bottoms without issues. Bacteria eat the sludge and other debris, Wittstock said, so the gravel does not cause a problem.

This subject has been the focus of many conversations in the pond world, especially between traditional water gardeners and koi kichi. Some people attribute the topic of gravel versus no gravel pond bottoms to being a divisive factor between the two worlds.

A couple of years ago, Eric Triplet, an eco-system specialist, and Kent Wallace, a koi pond filtration specialist, came together at Pondapalooza 2007 to help the trades bury the hatchet. Triplet and Wallace joined forces and led the team pond build at the Savannah, Ga., Marriott Hotel.

Burying the hatchet was a symbolic gesture to bring the water garden and koi worlds closer for the betterment of the trade. Some gravel was used for this trade event hybrid koi pond.

What do you think about using gravel on the bottom of a koi pond or water garden?