

## Is the Good Ride Over for the Water Garden Niche?

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Can the pond world change homeowner perception that water use equals wasted water? (Courtesy of Mike Garcia) According to an article I recently read in Irrigation & Green Industry magazine, the waterscape niche of the landscape industry experienced phenomenal growth (a rate of 22 to 25 percent) the past few years. For 2008 and 2009, however, the water garden world was down 20 to 25 percent each year, according to the article. It estimated the size of the water garden market to professional contractors to be \$175 to \$225 million annually.

These numbers can make your head spin. Is the good ride over?

Two leading reasons for these hard numbers are the economic crisis, which adversely affected every segment of the economy -- especially the construction sector -- and the drought, which continues to hammer large segments of North America. Homeowner perception is that running water translates to wasted water.

Some pockets of the water garden world report doing fine and even thriving in the current economic climate, but most are facing huge challenges. When one door closes, however, two more often open, if people stay focused on the right things.

Do you think the pond world can rise to the occasion and innovate products that change the perception of wasting water? Are there areas where pond builders can use their knowledge of pumps and liner to take advantage of the green movement? What do you see the water garden world evolving into in the future?