

Pond World, Not Yet an Industry

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Water Garden News has splashed into the world of blogging. I've been invited to discuss the issues affecting our businesses and I welcome your comments.

In my conversations with other pond builders, I've found much agreement that we can't quite call the pond world an industry yet. We're so small that we're not really an industry, but more of a niche within the construction and landscaping industries.

What makes an occupation an industry? The amount of money generated from that field is a great beginning. Just look at other industries such as the medical industry, the car industry and the construction industry. These fields generate many billions of dollars annually.

The pond construction niche can only dream of hitting the billion-dollar mark at this point. It still is an emerging field in the United States. Even koi enthusiasts pride themselves on being "hobbyist." Those who deem themselves true pond professionals are a rare breed.

Another factor that contributes to making an occupation an industry is the opportunities for professionals to network with manufacturers in their field. There are few conventions that serve the pond niche, including Pondapalooza (usually held in August) and Info Tanza (usually held in October).

In order to propel the pond world toward industry status, we must overcome some major challenges. One at the forefront of my mind is the severe drought that is threatening large areas of the United States. Even though it has been proven that the water used in a pond is much less than that used on grass, public perception seems to be that water features consume a lot of water.

In Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Water District implemented a Stage 2 drought alert. This means that home owners can only water their landscapes twice a week! Water features are mentioned in the stipulations and these are regulated as well. Water districts seem to think that water features waste water, so they are being turned off and drained at their facilities. This is bad for our businesses and our niche.

How can pond professionals change these misconceptions? Arm ourselves with the right information about pond water evaporation rates. The International Professional Pond Contractors Association did a study at the University of Nebraska to find out which uses more water: a pond or grass. The results can be obtained from IPPCA. Armed with this kind of information, we can educate the water districts and the public about water features.

Of course, we want to conserve water wherever and whenever we can. A pondless waterfall uses less water than a pond because you can turn it off at night, thus saving water from oversplashing as well as saving electricity.

My koi pond is in full sun, and the water lost from evaporation has lessened since I installed a couple of floating islands in it. Feel free to share your water-saving tips in the comment section below.

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