

## Fish Hobby Meets Career

My grandfather introduced me to the water gardening hobby more than 40 years ago when he installed a small blue fiberglass pond in his modest concrete patio. That was on the other side of 'The Pond' where I grew up in a small village in Cambridgeshire, England.

Not to be outdone, my father put in a bigger and better pond in our garden. Our two-hole affair connected in the middle by a shallow stream made of poured concrete with a cement rendering to make it water-proof. It was fun until the water turned green at which point most of the family lost interest.

Being the mischievous farm boy that I was, our pond became my secret fishing hole where I'd catch and release goldfish. I never lost interest.

Occasionally, on a Sunday afternoon, my father took me to our local pond store. Mind you, this was the 1960s in a rural part of England. My village had a population of about 800 people. The 'big city' where the pond shop was located had a population of about 4,000 people. The store carried regular pond supplies, but the real attraction for me was the fish it sold.

Fast forward to the early 1990s when I moved to this side of 'The Pond' to marry a girl from Alabama. I opened a landscape business and one of my first personal projects was to install a 100-gallon pond in our back yard.

Again, we loved it until the water turned green. This time, instead of fishing in it, I learned from it.

Soon, I wondered why water gardening was not popular in the American South where the climate is so favorable. During extensive travels with my wife, I studied ponds and water gardening everywhere we went: Canada, England, Russia, France, Finland, China, Costa Rica, Tahiti and Brazil.

When I couldn't find the supplies I needed in Alabama, I opened my own pond store in Huntsville. That was in 1998, in a cramped 900-square-foot retail space behind my landscape company. The little store grew to become two large stores with a total of 15 acres and 20,000 square feet of covered retail space.

My company, Across the Pond, now ranks among the largest water garden centers in the Southeast. All of this started from the memory of a young boy who never lost interest in his homemade pond and who treasured the memory of going to see the fish with his dad. Follow your dreams.

Now I'm heading on vacation with my family. During my travels I will offer ideas on the different cultures of water gardening, and how I've incorporated what I've learned into my business.

[« Back to Views from Across the Pond](#)