

## Include the 'Wow' Factor in Your Pond Projects

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During a visit to Russia, Jeannie and I visited Peterhof. The Peterhof features struck me nearly speechless with their beauty and creativity. Soon after Yeltsin came to power and the former Soviet Union haltingly opened its doors to the outside world, my wife dragged me to Russia for our summer vacation. I would have rather gone white-water rafting or to the dentist, but sometimes you sacrifice to keep the wife happy. Since I had visited post-War Poland as a teenager, I was prepared for another visit to a stark communist country with a boring history.

What surprised and intrigued me most was our visit to Peterhof, the imperial estate designed by Tsar Peter the Great in the early 1700s. Often called the "Russian Versailles," Peterhof boasts the largest system of fountains in the world, and that is what caught my attention.

The technological achievements from that period of time, given the remote location and the geographical challenges, are nothing short of spectacular. Even my most challenging fountain installations pale in comparison with the engineering feats of the simplest water features at Peterhof.

The Peterhof features include four major cascades, all gravity-driven, and more than 140 fountains at this palace on the banks of the Gulf of Finland. The fountains operate without the use of pumps. Water is supplied from natural springs and collected in reservoirs.

The elevation difference between the cascades creates the water pressure to drive most of the fountains. This landscaping masterpiece has survived 300 years of harsh Russian winters, German occupation during World War II and years of communist neglect, and most of the piping is original.

The Peterhof feature centerpiece is the Grand Cascade featuring an impressive golden statue of Samson grasping the jaws of a lion. The Samson Fountain is supplied by a special aqueduct, more than three miles long, that draws water and pressure from a high-elevation source. It was here, standing below the cascading pools, that I was first struck nearly speechless with the beauty and creativity of the place.

Along with the creativity and innovation, the Peterhof feature includes humor. Several of the fountains are pressure-activated. Children running across the stones on a hot summer day might get sprinkled by a pressure-activated fountain. Another has jets disguised as an umbrella so that when someone enters to take a seat on the circular bench around the stem, a curtain of water drops from the umbrella spokes. In one of the grottos, a table carries a bowl of artificial fruit. The table is rigged with jets of water that soak visitors when they reach for the fruit.

In this modern age it is easy to get caught up in the 'sameness' of each project. While not every water feature should rival those of the great castles of the world, each water feature should be unique and every project ought to have one 'wow' factor.