

## Tips to Meet Client Expectations

Friday, March 19, 2010

Ponds generally fall into three options: dedicated koi ponds that contain only fish, water gardens that contain only aquatic plants and hybrid ponds with a mix of plants and fish. With many clients, as well as people in the industry, using the term pond for all three options, pond builders must communicate well with their clients. Communicating with clients helps ensure pond builders create the dedicated koi pond, water garden or hybrid pond customers really want. (Courtesy of Kathleen Buckner/BowTie Inc.) clients to ensure they provide the right pond or water garden that meets each client's expectations.

"I interview my clients about why they want a pond and what things they like about a pond," said Eric Triplett, owner of Exotic Aquatics in Yukaipa, Calif. "A lot of times they like everything about a pond -- the koi, the water plants and the gravel. I educate them on the maintenance of the pond, and then I tell them how we can achieve what they want."

Discussing the following issues with clients can help ensure that pond and water garden builders provide the feature that clients want.

**Shape and Size** - Koi ponds must be large enough to maintain the fish, which can grow to up to 50 pounds and 24 inches long. Koi ponds also must remain deep enough to keep out predators.

Dedicated koi ponds typically measure four to six feet deep and hold 40,000 to 50,000 gallons of water. Smaller hybrid ponds might hold 500 to 5,000 gallons of water.

Many pond builders advise clients who want dedicated koi ponds to build the largest pond they can afford to sufficiently house the fish.

Pond builders also should ascertain the pond shape their clients want. Do they want a formal, regularly shaped feature, a natural-looking Japanese pond or one that contours their landscape?

Puzzle-shaped ponds can complicate filtration, said Steve Walker, president of Sacramento Koi in Rocklin, Calif. Because these ponds contain dead areas where water does not move, Walker said it causes leaves and debris to collect and sink to the bottom.

**Plants** - Plants can benefit ponds by providing surface coverage that keeps water from getting to hot, breaking down algae and releasing oxygen, said Doron Steinberg, owner of Ponds Unlimited in Houston, Texas. Plants also can complicate matters for pond owners, he said, and they require added maintenance.

Walker said pond builders should advise clients of the potential risk plants can pose to fish by inviting predators around. He also said they must eliminate parasites that plants carry before placing them in the pond.

**Rocks** - Rocks can pose a physical danger to fish because they can bruise themselves on rough edges. Many professionals recommended that dedicated koi ponds limit rock usage to coping along the top edge.