

HOW-TO Choose Between A Water Garden Pond, A Traditional Koi Pond & A Hybrid Koi Pond

Choosing what type of water feature pond you want to have is the most important decision you will make as every other decision stems from this decision. All the variables from design and construction to location and filtration plus a myriad of other decisions cannot be decided upon until you decide if you're going to install a water garden pond, a traditional koi pond or a hybrid koi pond. This segment of the HOW-TO Library will help you understand each of the water features, the differences between each and my personal opinion as to their pro's & con's. If you have any questions [Contact Us](#) so that we may help you in making the right decision.

Water Garden Ponds

Water garden ponds are the most popular out of all the pond water features. The appeal to the vast majority of consumers is mostly due to their appearance, availability and ease of construction by using [pond kits](#) and is also where most of the manufacturers spend most of their money marketing their products. All these factors have created an explosion in the water garden industry in the last 5 years that has made this niche the fastest growing segment in the Green Industry.

When most people, and unfortunately most contractors too, use the term 'koi pond' they are actually referring to a water garden pond. A water garden pond may have [koi fish](#), goldfish, shubunkin and other species of fish. The original intention in wanting this type of water feature is to create an environment where the homeowner can relax and find peace and tranquility amongst waterfalls, streams with small [footbridges](#) and [aquatic plants](#) such as blooming water lilies and cattails swaying in the wind while fish lazily swim about. Having this personal and private paradise is for the total enjoyment of the homeowner. In contrast, a traditional koi pond is all about creating a habitat for the koi to thrive in and aesthetics to the design and construction take a back seat. This is not to imply that all traditional koi ponds are ugly but if the budget allows for either the construction of a pretty pond feature or a perfect environment for the koi, the latter would be most important to a person desiring a traditional koi pond.

Most water gardens average 2 feet in depth, are constructed using all inclusive [pond kits](#), pre-formed "tubs", PVC or [EPDM liners](#) and have basic filtration systems ranging from shoebox sized filters that sit at the bottom of the pond to more advanced systems that incorporate a mechanical skimmer and biological waterfall filters. [Mechanical skimmers](#) are used to house the [submersible pump](#) which creates a flow into the skimmer that helps removes floating debris such as leaves and pollen from the pond's water surface into a basket or net for easy disposal. [Biological waterfall filters](#) are the most common type of biological filters used in water garden ponds because they are easy to install and hide within the

construction of the waterfall itself.

In the construction of a water garden pond natural stone boulders are used along with decorative gravel in order to create the all-natural look. Natural stone boulders of varying sizes are used to build the waterfall and are also used inside the pond to lend support to the pond's vertical walls. Decorative gravel is used to cover the pond's bottom and the plant shelves so that the liner is not visible. A well-executed water garden pond construction project should end with a water garden feature that has the appearance of a natural lagoon pond. After the addition of fish, water lilies and other aquatic plants you should have a water garden pond feature that will enhance not only the aesthetics of your home but to also provide a place to wind-down and relax and enjoy family and friends.

The Pondman's™ Views On Water Garden Ponds

PRO's:

- If 2 feet or less in depth they do not require a permit (check local & state laws)
- Most natural looking
- Gravel in pond creates more surface area for [beneficial bacteria](#)
- Most are easy do-it-yourself projects in just a few days or weekends
- Availability of all-inclusive do-it-yourself [pond kits](#)
- Most filtration systems are incorporated into the pond construction and are not visible
- Easy to maintain if properly and routinely serviced
- Availability of replacement equipment & parts
- Availability of a [National Certified Pond Contractor Referral Network](#)
- Improves property value with great return on investment

CON's:

- Over 40% of all professionally installed water garden ponds are improperly installed from the first day. This is due to a fast growing industry and the lack of experience by contractors from other industries (landscape maintenance, irrigation, etc.) building ponds without previous knowledge of ecosystems, filtration, flow rates, etc. See [HOW-TO Choose A Water Garden Pond Contractor](#)
- False manufacturer claims that water garden ponds need only yearly maintenance. All require very easy and quick weekly maintenance (5 to 10 minutes) and most require a yearly complete clean-out [water garden pond maintenance & service](#) (drain, clean & refill)
- High volume of "junk" equipment in the market that have high failure rates
- Are easily overstocked with fish
- [Pond kits](#) & most available information on water garden pond construction do not distinguish the different needs that are required due to varying weather conditions

Want to build a water garden pond? **CLICK Here** [HOW-TO Build A Water Garden Pond](#)

Traditional Koi Ponds

Tradition is the foundation to the road that we currently travel. Unfortunately, tradition is often viewed as ‘an old way of doing things’ and a hindrance to progress. The true fact is that tradition is what promotes and sustains long-term progress and innovation.” Freddie Combas “The Pondman”™

Traditional koi ponds construction and the hobby of koi keeping go back more than 2,000 years. Traditional koi pond construction has been on the rise for the past few years primarily due to a larger exposure of koi ponds in the media (pond magazines, HGTV, etc.) and the growing number of water garden pond owners that have grown from water garden pond owners into the hobby of koi keeping. Today, people that continue to uphold the traditional values in the hobby of koi keeping proudly call themselves Koi-Kichi (Koi Crazy). Just as there is the AKC (American Kennel Club) and the Westminster Dog Show in the koi hobby there is the AKCA (American Koi Club of America) and they too have koi shows all across America.

Traditional koi ponds differ in many ways from water garden ponds. The main difference and catalyst for all the other difference is the intent or purpose for the koi pond itself. Whereas a water garden pond is built to give a natural looking environment used for relaxation and enjoyment by the homeowner. A traditional koi pond is designed and built with the primary purpose of providing the koi with an environment to thrive in. It is the koi that brings pleasure and enjoyment to the homeowner, not necessarily the aesthetics of the koi pond itself.

Filtration system design and equipment are the next big differences. These filtration system designs could employ one or multiple of the following; [bottom drains](#), [mechanical skimmers](#), [pressurized media filters](#), [external pumps](#), [ultraviolet sterilization units](#) (UV lights), [ozone generators](#), [aerators](#), directional flow-jets (TPR, GPR, VPR), [settling chambers](#), etc. These koi pond filtration systems are designed to remove as much solid and chemical waste as your budget will allow. These filter systems can be quite large and unsightly so their placement should be considered when deciding to have a traditional koi pond installation done.

Another major difference between traditional koi pond construction and water garden pond construction is not only that different filtration systems are used but also that the construction itself is different. Some traditional koi ponds are built using EPDM rubber liner but most are usually built either using concrete block, shot-crete and or [polyurea spray-on coating](#). These koi ponds can either be in-

ground or above ground in construction and are usually very geometric in shape such as rectangles, circles and squares with kidney bean shapes also being very popular.

The difference in construction that generates the most debate between traditional koi pond construction contractors and water garden pond construction contractors is that there are no rocks or gravel placed inside the pond. The inside of the pond is left bare and smooth and is usually coated in a black finish. There are no aquatic plants placed inside the koi pond, as you would find in a water garden pond installation. Not having rocks, gravel or aquatic plants in the koi pond accentuates the koi's presence and also reduces the possibilities of the koi fish being injured.

Traditional koi ponds are not for everyone but should definitely be considered if you are a person that will probably get into the hobby of koi keeping. Attend a few meetings at your local koi club before you decide which type you want. **CAUTION:** When attending these meetings some Koi Kichis have been known to tell newcomers to the hobby that there is only one way to build a pond and their way is it. Keep an open mind, go to some local pond tours where you will be able to view different types of pond features and talk to the homeowners and get their feedback as to their enjoyment, maintenance requirements and what they would have done differently, then make your own decision. After all, whether it's the koi or the environment of the water feature, you will ultimately be the one enjoying it (and paying for it too!).

The Pondman's™ Views On Traditional Koi Ponds

PRO's:

- Availability of local & state koi clubs
- Can handle higher quantity of koi
- Can handle bigger koi
- Easy to maintain if properly and routinely serviced
- Availability of replacement equipment & parts
- Availability of a [National Certified Pond Contractor Referral Network](#)
- All require very easy and quick weekly maintenance (5 to 10 minutes) and most do NOT require a yearly complete clean-out
- Construction methods allow for any type of design (Oriental, Traditional, Mediterranean, Contemporary, etc.)
- Construction methods allow for both in-ground and above ground koi pond construction

CON's:

- If more than 2 feet in depth they require a permit (check local & state laws)
- Most water garden pond contractors do not know the difference between a water garden pond with koi in it and a traditional koi pond with koi in it. See [HOW-TO Choose A Traditional Koi Pond Contractor](#)

- Are not easy do-it-yourself projects
- No availability of all-inclusive do-it-yourself koi pond kits
- Most filtration systems are NOT incorporated into the pond construction and ARE visible (usually placed on the side of the house)
- Higher budgets required due to construction methods & filtration equipment
- Not as natural in appearance

Want to build a traditional koi pond? **CLICK Here** [HOW-TO Build A Traditional Koi Pond](#)

Hybrid Koi Ponds

Definition of the word HYBRID: *A functional unit in which two or more different technologies are combined to satisfy a given requirement.* There are hybrid cars, hybrid plants, hybrid grasses, hybrid this and hybrid that.....and now hybrid koi ponds. Hybrid koi pond construction has also been on the rise for the past few years and has become somewhat of a marketing “buzz” word in this and other industries. I guess hybrid koi ponds sounds better than what we have been calling them for years, “Frankenstein ponds”. We have always grabbed a little technology from this industry and that industry, as we needed to find ways to do things more efficiently not only mechanically but also biologically. Most of these hybrid koi pond construction projects that we have built have been for some of our previous water garden pond construction customers. These customers have become attached to their koi and when enlarging their current water garden pond they want the look of a water garden pond but the technologies in filtration used in traditional koi pond construction.

Hybrid koi ponds are designed and built to accomplish a specific goal, need or want without being true to any one mindset, technology or methodology. This type of pond construction is normally 3 feet to 4 feet in depth and all other variances such as design, filtration system, construction methodology and construction materials can be instituted, omitted or merged as needed in order to achieve a specific goal just as long as the koi pond’s water quality and clarity are not compromised.

As this industry grows, new technologies will be developed and others will be adapted from other industries, which will create a larger share of the pie for hybrid koi pond construction within this industry in the near future. With a well-planned hybrid koi pond construction project you can have your cake and eat it too!

The Pondman's™ Views On Hybrid Koi Ponds

PRO's:

- All the best of what water garden pond construction and traditional koi pond construction have to offer
- All require very easy and quick weekly maintenance (5 to 10 minutes)
Construction methods allow for any type of design (Oriental, Traditional, Mediterranean, Contemporary, etc.)
- Construction methods allow for both in-ground and above ground koi pond construction
- Natural in appearance
- Improves property value with great return on investment
- Availability of a [National Certified Pond Contractor Referral Network](#)

CON's:

- If more than 2 feet in depth they require a permit (check local & state laws)
- Most water garden pond contractors & traditional koi pond contractors do not know the difference between a water garden pond, a traditional koi pond and a hybrid koi pond. See [HOW-TO Choose A Hybrid Koi Pond Contractor](#)
- Are not easy do-it-yourself projects
- No availability of all-inclusive do-it-yourself hybrid koi pond kits
- Higher budgets MAY be required depending on construction methods & filtration equipment
- Some MAY require a yearly complete clean-out

Want to build a hybrid koi pond? **CLICK Here** [HOW-TO Build A Hybrid Koi Pond](#)