

**Ramblings** (Continued from Sept. 06) — Jerry Kyle

It was the year 2002, summer had ended, and Phyllis had agreed, somewhat reluctantly, that I could build a pond in the back yard. I needed a hobby in my retirement years and, after all, how hard could it be since our home had been built in what had been an old vineyard. What made our neighborhood in the San Joaquin valley so fine for grapes is we had three to four feet of Hanford Sandy Loam which sits on a crust of clay based hard pan. That base acts like a giant flower pot bottom that holds the moisture in the first few feet of soil where most of the roots are thereby conserving moisture and fertilizer. In hind sight, it is too bad we build our houses on the best farmland but, that is another story. What is most important to someone digging a pond is the luxury of the first three to four feet being sandy loam with no rocks or gravel. It is just pure sandy loam. The loam was provided by sediment settling from flooding over the ages. I thought this is going to be fun. What I needed was a plan.

My grandson built me a computer because that's what kids do these days and he showed me how to "surf." Being told anything I want to learn is out there to be surfed, I typed in "koi pond." There were over four thousand nine hundred sites and over the next six months I looked at most of them. Today, as I write this, I checked to see how many sites there are to see the number has climbed to one million three hundred thirty thousand sites. However, of great concern is much of the information out there, in my opinion, is still less than accurate. It is possible to make a nice sounding case for just plain bad information.

Many people enjoy building their own web sites and often post pictures of their accomplishments. I particularly remember one site that depicted pictures stating that this was my first pond, this was my second pond and this is my third pond. The article went on to list the changes the author would make if he ever remolded or built another pond. My brain registered, "I didn't know what I was doing, I still didn't know what I was doing, and I still don't know what I am doing."

My attitude was that I am too old, too lazy, and too poor to want to do this three times and still not be satisfied so my solution was to research. There was information at the library but while the pictures were nice the publication dates were old. I had already learned that the hobby is growing at such a rate that five year old information is old technology. The web had the most information and many sites had links to other sites.

One day, by chance, one of the links took me to a site by a guy calling himself "hijack." The site was about square dancing but there were pictures of Jack's pond. I didn't know where Jack was but the picture showed he certainly had a nice looking pond. More importantly there was a link to The Camellia Koi Club website. Somewhere along the way in my research I had read that the best way to learn about koi ponds was to find a koi club and join. I had been looking but had found no clubs in our area until I stumbled on this link.



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The Camellia Koi Club met in the Sacramento area only an hour drive away and, I felt, was worth looking into. They were planning a pond tour that April which I attended and met Carolyn who was the club president. When I shared with her my frustrations over getting so much conflicting advice she suggested being patient and listening to all ideas. She told me there is no such thing as a perfect pond for all situations and that I should listen to all ideas and I will meet people in the club who will be happy help me sort them out. I sincerely thank Carolyn for that guidance and for convincing me to join. Joining got me invited into many back yards where I saw many ponds that I otherwise would never have had the opportunity to view. These koi pond owners were people who had a good grasp of what they were doing and had many diverse ideas from which I could base my plans for my project. Joining a koi club is the best thing a person can do to learn about ponds and koi and the people are nice, too. I often tell others that I joined for the koi ponds and stay for the people.

It was time to put my ideas on paper but now it was with a sense of confidence as I had a support group behind me. I even met Jack who as it turned out lives in my town in the very next block. With a swimming pool size pond and beautiful koi, Jack is a gardener and has been an inspiration.

The final plans were in the works and I was anxious to show them to my new “advisors.”

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