

Can we invent a plan to justify more koi in a small pond?

By Jerold Kyle, KHA

Plan "A." Some might add a more powerful pump that doubles the flow through the filter thinking it will allow the system to handle more koi. I know of a bubble bead filter rated to handle up to a 4000 gallon pond that would not do the job it was thought to do. On checking with the manufacturer it was determined the filter was designed to operate effectively and efficiently at 1200 to 2000 gal flow through per hour. Blasting the water through the media at 4000 gal per hour in order to get the 100% turnover an hour that the pond owner thought was best made the filter next to useless. A filter designed to handle up to a certain size pond is also designed to handle only a certain flow rate so cranking up the volume may have the opposite desired effect and is not a way to more koi. Scrap plan "A."



Plan "B." Get a bigger filter system. If the specs on a filter system say "up to" so many gallons, what does that mean? It means simply that with average size koi lightly fed and stocked at about one per 300 gallons of pond water, that the filter may handle the bio load for the pond under ideal conditions. More koi and/or heavier feeding may overtax the system and the bio-filter may not handle the load. Generally, to be safe, we like to get a filter system rated at double our pond size. Does that mean we can have double the koi? No, it means the filter system is more surely able to do its job despite the fact we might tend to occasionally over feed those little beggars when they swim up to us, open their mouths, and say,

"Feed me, feed me." What if one doubles the double size? Can we now double the number of koi in the pond? While a great bio-filter capacity is a wonderful safeguard, all it does is help assure there will not be an ammonia or nitrite problem but it will not make it safe to have too many fish in the pond. But breeders do it, someone says. Fish sense their environment and will not grow in this situation. Breeders may hold thousands in crowded tanks with massive med doses and sell two year olds the size of normal one year olds so the color looks good. Over crowding is a major problem no matter how good the system is. Every little thing can be passed from Koi to Koi resulting in mass infections without the constant application of meds. Scrap plan "B."

Mother's Plan. In plan "A" gills will be burned resulting in death from ammonia and/or brown blood disease from nitrite poisoning will do the job. In plan "B" we trade one set of problems for another set of problems. We can plan all we like but, the fact is Mother already has her plan. In the double, double pond there will be a huge nitrate accumulation suppressing the immune system. Massive water changes done regularly to get rid of the nitrates will only cause stress and stress compromises the immune system. Crowded proximity virtually guarantees that if a Koi gets a fluke there will be a massive fluke outbreak involving all in the pond in short order. Bacterial problems can spread like wildfire and deaths will result. Mother's plan says if you do everything else right and limit the pond population to one mature Koi per 200

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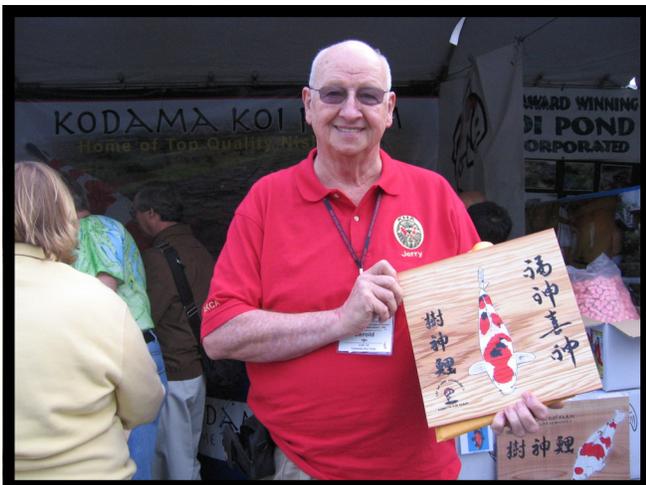
to 300 gallons of pond size, 1000 gal for jumbo, she may let you keep your Koi. Did you notice the, "she may let you?" Mother has determined how many Koi can live and be happy and healthy in a given body of water and if you will not do your job she will do it for you. She is not too forgiving and if you insist on circumventing her plan and trying to instill one of your own, something is going to die. Part of deciding to add a new beautiful Koi is deciding who is going to go? Mother says for more Koi, have the pond bigger or have two ponds.

THIS MONTH IN THE KOI POND—*Jerold Kyle, KHA*

Spring Feeding

Ahhh, spring, when things warm up. The water in the koi pond is warming up in some areas but not so much in protected areas. Some still have 50°F water while others are getting warmer. My pond in the sun is 58°F but not far away, in the shade, it would still be 50°F. The koi in both ponds would like to be fed. I'll feed lightly and wonder if those pond owners in the shade are feeding a little also. Dug out the ammonia test kit and as expected, no ammonia. Was at another pond and we checked ammonia and got a .25 ppm reading. Why is that, someone asks? Both ponds only fed lightly but one has a bio-filter coming to life while the cooler pond has a bio filter that has not come to life. Good thing he was feeding lightly. 50°F is still too cool to feed so don't listen to those little beggars mouthing, "Feed me, feed me," if your water is still in the 50°F range. In the spring it is a good idea to dig out that ammonia test kit and keep track of yourself to be sure you are not feeding too much too soon. It is so easy to do. Someone once said to me, "But they're hungry!" I wonder if that qualifies as killing them with love?

Remember what Mr. Toshio Sakai taught us about spring feeding. He said spring feeding goes to reproduction. Heavy feeding in the spring is going to make those girls get full of eggs and have large stressful spawns and get all beat up doing so. Oh yes, and stinky spawns too. Don't kill them with love. Love them with care. Lightly feed only a few times a week at first as water warms and bio-filters come alive. Use the ammonia test kit to know you are doing things right. If a small ammonia reading occurs, stop feeding until it goes away and feed later as water warms and bio-filter comes alive. Then, as water continues to warm, feed only what will be eaten in five minutes. Don't wait ten minutes and then come back again just because they beg. In the summer food goes to growth and you can feed them a little every hour on the hour if you like and it will go to growth so by September show time they will look great. Summer is summer and spring is now and now can be a dangerous time if you do not pay attention. Use the test kits. That is why you bought them.



Jerry Kyle at 2009 San Diego Koi Show / AKCA Seminar