



Trends

in the Pondkeeping World

Pondkeeping as a whole is not simply a hobby — it's a lifestyle. Pond owners want that perfect piece of paradise on their property, which takes a lot of planning. Then once the pond is installed, there's the maintenance. While a lot of pondkeepers may not be concerned with "keeping up with the Joneses," so to speak, it can still be interesting to see what fellow pondkeepers are up to and where the pondkeeping lifestyle is headed.

When it comes to current pond trends, it's all about being more educated and making things easier, in terms of both maintenance and financial output. Pondkeepers today are more savvy, more economical and more concerned about sustainability. These trends are all reflected in what people in the pond and water garden industry are seeing and experiencing every day.

When looking at where the pond and water gardening lifestyle seems to be going, it's all about the pondkeepers themselves.

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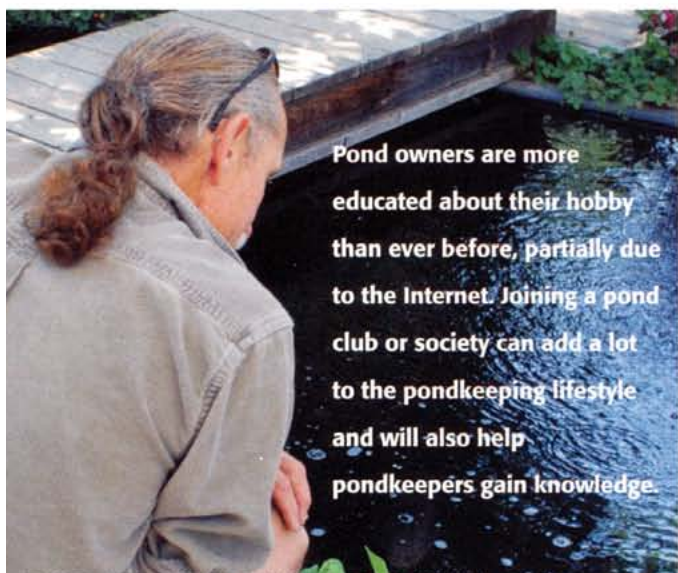
The Educated Consumer

When taking on any endeavor, doing things right means educating yourself, and can mean the difference between success and failure. Luckily, pondkeepers seem to take the smart route and become well-educated about ponds before taking the plunge. The Internet era has made it much easier for pond owners to keep themselves informed (as long as the websites are reliable).

Companies are aware of the educated consumers of the modern day — and are responding. “The hobbyist today is a more educated consumer,” says Carolyn Weise, Pond Consumer Relations Manager for Ecological Laboratories and author of *ABCs of Ponds*. “Before they contact a builder, they have done a lot of work on the Internet to see what’s available.” She adds that she has had consumers call her for information and data that previously would not have been thought of as being relevant. Such awareness suggests a very educated crowd in the pondkeeping world.

Ponds USA author Stephen Noble has noted that personally, he sees potential pondkeepers who are “totally knowledgeable about aquatics or completely unaware” of its nuances, noting that “very few are in the middle.”

There is indeed a lot to know about pondkeeping, from the beginning stages of setup and design, to ongoing maintenance and seasonal care. In any case, it seems that pond owners are generally moving in the right direction, as long as they’re moving forward and are guided by good information. The important message here is to remember that if you’re having trouble, information is available.



Pond owners are more educated about their hobby than ever before, partially due to the Internet. Joining a pond club or society can add a lot to the pondkeeping lifestyle and will also help pondkeepers gain knowledge

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Less Is More

A couple of current trends are suggesting that in today’s pond and water gardens, less is more. This applies not only to the size of ponds and water features, but also to their water usage. For example, smaller water features are expected to grow in popularity due to their ease of maintenance; this includes items such as boulders and urns bubbling water (Hutchurson, 2011). In addition, pondless waterfalls are expected to become more popular. Overall, trends seem to be pointing toward keeping the upkeep on the easy side, while still allowing water gardeners the tranquility of having a water feature.

A Step in the Right Direction: Sustainability

Speaking of moving forward, sustainability is a popular topic in the pond world these days. Using less energy and less water overall seems to be on the minds of many pondkeepers. Saving energy is something that large and smaller pond owners alike may take into consideration. Art Hantla, National Sales Manager of Fielding Pump, says he sees growth in the number of people who want to conserve energy. “People with larger ponds that require water flows exceeding 15,000 GPH are often turned away from having a pond due to excessive energy costs,” he says.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to high energy consumption that make it easier for pond owners to keep their energy usage at least as low as possible. Mike Garcia, who writes the blog “Pondspectives With Mike” on Water Garden News’ website

(watergardennews.com) and who is also founder of EnviroscapELA, notes LED lights as being one of the trends popular with consumers right now, in addition to rainwater harvesting, rainwater diversion and pondless waterfalls.

Rainwater harvesting is just one way that pond owners are moving toward a more sustainable hobby — and it also happens to be something that is supported by legislation in some areas. In September 2011, Atlanta passed the Atlanta Potable Rainwater bill, which allows residents to treat rainwater for use in their residences. An excerpt states some of the goals of the ordinance: “To regulate potable rainwater catchment for single-



Concerns about sustainability could be causing an increase in the popularity of smaller water features.

family residential use; to institute safeguards that ensure potable rainwater catchment systems do not interfere with the City of Atlanta water supply; to streamline the installation of potable rainwater catchment systems."

Atlanta is not the only area with this type of legislation, though it is the first city in the U.S. to have such legislation. Other states have laws to the same effect, such as Texas, Oregon and Arkansas (Heflin, 2002). And the interest in potable rainwater is not limited to the U.S. — in fact, it is even more widespread in Australia and Germany (Edelstein, 2011). It seems that pond owners all over the world see the benefits of harvesting rainwater.

Impact of the Economy

Of course, it's impossible to overlook the economy and its effects on any hobby or lifestyle — and pondkeeping is no exception. Like the overall economy, it's difficult for anyone to simply pinpoint whether things are truly improving. Chris Clevers, President of Hikari, notes some changes due to pondkeepers being more careful with their disposable income. He mentions "a transition to purchases of larger sizes by consumers looking to save money, which can reduce the annual visits to their retail location, thus reducing their exposure to impulse items."

While larger sizes of certain products may be the trend, smaller

seems better when it comes to pond pumps and filters. "We see a continued trend of lower volume pumps and filters for those pumps being purchased for ponds less than 2,000 gallons," states Dr. Bill Minnick, President of Danner Manufacturing. Dr. Minnick also notes the "uncertain economy" as fueling this trend.

Some pond-related businesses seem to be seeing increases, while some are seeing decreases — but many seem to agree that not many people are starting new ponds. Many pondkeepers seem to be focusing more on maintenance and upkeep of their current ponds. So while the news is not necessarily that pondkeeping is a booming endeavor right now, it's certainly not disappearing. Water gardeners still love their hobby, and they continue to take good care of their ponds — if anything, they are simply a little more money-conscious while doing it.

The Conscientious Pondkeeper

So what are the trends in pondkeeping today? It looks like they're all about being conscientious overall. Most of the trends in pondkeeping now are centered around the pondkeepers and water gardeners themselves, as they become more educated, more savvy and more concerned with the sustainability of the pondkeeping lifestyle. In a way, it's all about making that perfect piece of paradise even more perfect, more earth-friendly, more economical and more viable right from the start. 🐸

References

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