

# Have A Place For A Pond?

(Continued from Page E1)

ing more time at their home" and are looking to improve their home and yards for when they come job from job stresses.

Consequently, Smith recommends picking a spot "close to the house, so you can enjoy it more.

The area should also have at least six hours of sunlight a day and not a lot of tree cover close so debris such as leaves and twigs will not be as much of a problem.

The pond should also be located to a source of electricity, which is necessary to power the pump, lighting, or perhaps an ultraviolet clarifier, which kills algae with ultraviolet radiation from the bulb.

Anyone considering installing a pond will have to also think about what depth the pond should be, since some townships will require a fence for a pond more than three feet deep.

Fish, however, "winter more reliably in water at least 30 inches deep," said Smith.

Also, "bear in mind what will it fit into your landscape," he said. "If you have a perennial, colonial-type garden, a pond with Japanese features will not necessarily be appropriate."

Money is another consideration. An on-deck, 35-gallon pond with the filter and fountain will run about \$100.

The average pond, however, is six foot by six foot and holds 500 gallons of water, estimates Smith. This setup runs about \$1,000 complete with fish, plants, a pump, liner, and filter.

Although preform ponds are available, liners are actually easier and more durable. Made of heavy-gauge rubber, the liners are flexible and not affected by ultraviolet light.

"It conforms to any shape you dig, and can be molded around a rock or root," he said. Liners also come with a 20-year warranty for holes.

Liners, which come in pre-cut widths, are about \$8 a linear foot.

The smallest is 10-foot

wide, although choices range up to 50 feet and lengths to whatever the installer needs.

As for shape, pond owners tend to prefer the kidney or hourglass contours. "There are very few that are perfectly round or perfectly square."

Once the hole is dug, the rest of the pond can be installed in a day or two, said Smith, although "it is best to let it sit for a day or two with the water in it and the pumps running before putting the fish in."

Whereas there are two schools of thought on stones versus a clean pond bottom, said Smith, he recommends not placing stones on the bottom of the pond.

"It is easier to clean, it doesn't hold debris like a rock bottom, it's easier to view fish, and it retains heat better for tropical plants. However, it's a debate among pond-keepers. There are pros and cons to both."

### Why Plants?

Smith advises that 60-75 percent of the pond's surface



Vividly-hued Koi are bred for their color.

be covered with floating plants such as lilies, water hyacinths, or water lettuce. This helps to shade the pond while the hanging roots absorb nutrients to keep the water clear, he explained.

Additionally, fish nibble at the roots and hanging foliage while they are protected from predators.

Aquatic edge plants — vegetation that lives in six inches of water to boggy, moist soils — include irises, cattails, and rushes. "They give height, additional levels, and color around the ponds," he said. These plants sit in pots on the pond's shelves.

Commercial soils feature chips of baked clay so that the water will not cloud if the pot is disturbed.

Comets, fantails, Shubunkin, and Koi brighten up the waters of many ponds across the county. Prices run from 25 cents for the small golden Comets to \$90 for the larger, splashily-colored Koi.

Also, tadpoles and selected species of snails provide clean-up duty for the pond's algae.

They are useful, said Smith, since they help keep the algae under control with minimal use of chemicals.

Customer Interest Growing Dave Frehafer, turf and supply manager at the Lititz branch of Stauffers of Kissel Hill, has seen customer interest grow in ponds in the 14 years that pond supplies have been available at the store.

"Before that we just had fountains," said Frehafer, "then we started adding aquatic plants and pumps and filters."

Besides bulk liners on the roll, the store also has a larger selection of plants and has a year-round selection of fish.

Frehafer is also a member of the Lancaster Aquarium Club, where a few pond owners are also members.

The liners, said Frehafer, have become heavier duty and have grown as customers began installing larger and larger ponds.

"We've gone from liners 15 to 25 feet wide — we keep having to go to bigger size rolls. Now we have the biggest pond form we can get," he said.

Filters have also had to stretch to keep up with customer demand. "We're carrying filters for 1,000-, 2,000-, and 3,000-gallon ponds," he said. "People started out small, decided they liked it, and added more and larger ponds," according to Frehafer.

The attraction, he said, is the soothing presence of the ponds. "People set up benches around the pond or eat breakfast out beside it," he said.

Lighting may also work to create the mood of the pond. Some owners opt for underwater lighting or lighting around the pond for night observation. There are even tropical night-blooming lilies, he said.

(Turn to Page E13)



Nick, 3, and Adrianna Spatafora, 2, Lititz, are eager helpers when it comes to feeding fish.

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