

BRIEF HISTORY

Koi carp are domesticated varieties of the common carp, (*Cyprinus carpio*) originally the carp were bred by Chinese rice farmers as food fish and dates back in Chinese history with many carvings and paintings of carp, however although some natural mutations appeared it is when the carp reached Japan that the rice farmers although still bred as food fish, the potential for developing the beautiful colours was also seen and taken seriously and hence the beginning of the "living jewels" nishiki goi .

Many colours and patterns have been developed, colour patterns very often refer to symbols in nature the word koi is a homophone for affection and love and play a large part in Japanese culture. These colour variations are divided into categories. The ghost koi has also become very popular, a hybrid from breeding the common carp and ogon koi and have silver scales. The doitsu meaning German in Japanese was established by introducing various scaleless carp from Germany into the breeding programmes. Koi if introduced to the wild and breeding not selected within a few generations they will revert to their original carp colourings.

Koi are known for their longevity, when the book living jewels was published in the 70's Dr Koshihara wrote about the fish in his clear spring fed pond, where the eldest Hanako was at that time 217 years old, the rings on the scales can date a fish same as telling the age of a tree, the other fish were also confirmed to be many years old, one at 150 years old and the others similar ages, the reason for this was almost certainly a result of the purity and non toxicity of the water, this where a seneye can be such a valuable piece of equipment, the cost for an early warning alert irrelevant to the potential value of your pond's inhabitants, despite highly efficient filtering systems certain factors can effect water quality and the earlier one is aware the sooner it can be rectified with minimum damage to the fish.

Care of koi carp.

Koi carp are a pond fish, their colours and patterns developed to look down on not from the side, of course small koi can be kept in an aquarium but sooner or later they will need to go into a pond with a large surface area to allow growth, development and well being. There are many filtration and water management systems, when designing or adapting the pond look at all options the better the filtration will allow a little more stocking but it does not compromise basic good fish husbandry.

A neutral to slightly above pH is ideal, certainly don't allow a drastic change in pH as this will cause stress, toxins can be introduced from rain running off contaminated roofs etc, sprays, insecticides that could be blowing in the wind, keeping a check on ammonia and pH is vital for healthy fish, the seneye has proved on many occasions to be a valuable piece of equipment apart from the early warning system saves messing about with kits and chemicals. Filters need to build up good bacteria same as an aquarium, koi are messy eaters and produce much waste, a pond has to cycle before it can cope with the nitrifying process, like wise if filters that have not been running during the hibernation periods, temperatures below 50 Deg F koi carp will not digest food and their metabolism slows down and this will be the hibernation period until the spring when temperatures start to rise. Approximate stocking ratio of koi would be something like 10sq ft to a fish, koi need good supply of oxygen, over stocking increases waste and potential ammonia and less oxygen to go around. Good water chemistry keeps the fish healthy and far more disease resistant.

Feeding should involve enough food to be consumed in a few minutes, many well prepared brands on the market which provides all necessary vitamins that the fish needs, koi will learn to eat from the hand, giving more pleasure to their owners or come to vibrations, a famous floating restaurant in Hawaii had koi trained to gather for feeding at the ringing of a bell.

NB

The use of ultra violet can help control algae, reduce some harmful bacteria and micro-organisms but it is not a replacement for filtration. Like all cold water fish handling and netting fish carefully is very important, the body slime is a protection against infections.

KOI CARP SPAWNING.

As the water warms up and more day light active females will start filling with eggs, males will be developing their tubercle spots as in all carp species. Usually 3-4 males will chase a female, numerous eggs that can run into hundreds of thousands are released into the plant root systems.

The eggs hatch similiar to goldfish, once free swimming and yolk sac absorbed the fry start looking for food, commercially the fry are culled during many stages of growth, some prized koi carp have been known to fetch huge sums of money.

ALGAE CONTROL

Keeping your pond crystal clear adds to your enjoyment, controlling green water or hair algae can be problematic. Obviously direct sunshine promotes all plant growth and algae is only a form of plant, adding more oxygenating plants will help deplete the nutrients that algae requires. Must be remembered that plants including algae convert CO₂ into oxygen during daylight but reverse the process at night, this in turn depletes the oxygen.

Algicides can be an excellent means of control as can passing water through ultra violet, hair algae can be scraped, netted out, positioning a pond, adding shade and maintaining a good natural cycle with plants are all relevant in maintaining crystal clear water .

Temperature control can change rapidly, too hot and the oxygen is soon rapidly depleted, the pond seneye keeps a constant monitoring of temperature, toxic ammonia and pH, the cost of this device is irrelevant to the cost and well being of your fish, it will also warn of water loss.

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