

Maintain and Improve the Backyard Pond

As homeowners continue to invest in their outdoor spaces, water elements like fountains, streams and backyard ponds are making a splash in popularity.

While creating a backyard pond is something that can be small and simple or expansive and detailed, retailers that stock and sell the project and maintenance materials can discover a loyal, repeat customer base.

If your store decides to dive into the pond niche, it's best to have an expert in the store who can answer customers' questions.

This guide provides you and your employees with basic information and tips to stay on top of the pond niche and help customers who want to know more about getting started.

PLANTS COMPLETE THE LOOK

If a customer is planning out their pond or looking to add to it, remind them of the importance of water plants. Not only do plants improve the look of the pond, but they also play a natural role in keeping it healthy. The three common pond plant categories are floating plants, shallow-water marsh plants and submerged plants.

- **Floating Plants**, like the water hyacinth, filter ponds naturally. Other examples are water lilies and lotus flowers.
- **Shallow-Water Marsh Plants** are found on the edges of ponds. Examples include umbrella plants, water iris and horsetail.
- **Submerged Plants** are grown in pots and placed at the bottoms of ponds. They remove excess nutrients from the water. A few examples include the water purslane and the fanwort.

MAINTAIN THE POND

To keep their ponds in good shape, customers should have a good-quality filtration system, a powerful pump, a protein skimmer, an aeration system and an ultraviolet sterilizer. The first few days the pond is running, homeowners should check the filter from the skimmer and clean it. After a pond has been up and running for a while, the most important task for owners is to check the filter and skimmer every week, especially in the fall, when leaves can clog it up. Also, pond owners should pick one day a year to deep-clean the pond by hosing off the rocks, emptying most of the water, adding fertilizer and refilling it.

PLANNING FOR THE SEASONS

Remind your outdoor-pond customers how to keep plants and fish healthy all year. In the fall, recommend that customers place plants and the recirculating pump lower in the pond. Nontropical plants and cold water fish can survive as long as they don't freeze. The fish will go dormant near the bottom of the pond, and the pump will keep the water moving, preventing it from freezing. In the winter, customers should check daily to make sure their pump is running and create a hole in any surface that forms over the pond. This will keep unhealthy gasses from forming under the pond.

ADD IN FISH

Most homeowners who create their own ponds will add fish to the mix. While it's not necessary, it adds more to the pond's overall look, and fish create a healthier ecosystem in ponds. The stocking level of a pond is critical to the health of fish. Too many fish can mean decreased oxygen levels and extra fish waste. A pond with a smaller filter can't keep as many fish. The most common fish homeowners add to ponds are goldfish and koi.

PERFORM WATER CHECKS

Pond owners need to keep a constant eye on the water to maintain a healthy pond. Issues like acid rains, fish waste and nutrient-enriched runoff can lead to bigger problems if they aren't addressed. If a customer has fish in their pond, this is even more important, because poor water quality can cause fish to suffer from health issues as well. Water quality is key, so pond owners should test factors like pH levels, ammonia and nitrites about once a week at the same time each day.