

Frequently Asked Questions

By Larry Lunsford

Q. Do you eat them?

A. NO!

Q. How long do Koi live?

A. There have been stories of Koi living 150 - 200 years. If well cared for, you could expect your Koi to live in your pond forever or until you do something stupid to kill them.

Q. How big do Koi get?

A. Wild carp can get to 5 feet long and weights over 100 pounds. Colorful Koi which are carp that have been selectively bred can get to lengths of 36" to 40" and weights up to 50 pounds.

Q. How small can a Koi pond be?

A. Small Koi (3" - 4") can be kept in something as small as a tub or half whiskey barrell for short periods. However, due to their rapid growth, you should plan to have a pond of at least a few hundred gallons to successfully keep Koi over the long term.

Q. Are Koi difficult to keep?

A. While they are not as easy as goldfish, they are not particularly difficult either. The main thing to keep in mind is that they get many times larger than goldfish and require proportionately more water and filtration.

Q. How much do Koi cost?

A. As with other animals you can find people giving them away and you can find people selling only the very best at prices to match. Its rumored that some Koi have been sold for over \$1,000,000.

Q. Do I really need a filter? Even with lots of plants and only a few Koi?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. What do you feed Koi?

A. Koi food, available from several manufacturers. Also, people food like fruits, vegetables, cereal, etc.

Q. Can I breed Koi myself?

A. Yes, it's fairly easy to raise baby Koi. Although, in a random pond spawning it is very rare to end up with quality Koi.

Q. How deep does my pond need to be?

A. You can get by with as little as 12". The water temperature will be more stable, your Koi will be healthier, and your Koi will be better protected from predators with a deeper pond. If you don't have freezing weather, 24" would be a good minimum. If you do get freezing weather, 36" is a good minimum. Deeper is better for many reasons.

Q. How long have Koi been around?

A. Since the mid 1800's - not for thousands of years as some may think. Fancy colored Koi were the product of random mutations of spawning carp in the rice paddies of Japanese farmers. The colorful ones became family pets (instead of dinner) and over the years selective breeding has produced today's Koi. It wasn't until the invention of the plastic bag that Koi became common outside Japan.

Q. Are Koi really pets?

A. Yes. They're not quite like dogs, but they will learn who their keeper is, they know when its dinner time, and each Koi has its own personality.

Q. Do Koi eat each other?

A. Koi will eat their own eggs and small fry. Once the fry get to around 1" - 2", the adult Koi recognize them as other carp and won't eat them.

Q. Are Koi aggressive with each other?

A. No. They are social and have been observed to care for each other. Many ponds seem to have a leader but they do not fight to establish dominance. When they're nervous they will school behind the leader. Before they've become completely accustomed to you, they will wait for the leader to start eating before the rest decide its ok to come up for food.

Q. Do Koi bite?

A. No. Once they become accustomed to you, they may suck on your hand looking for food. They also have some teeth - molars in the rear of their mouth, but its not physically possible for them to bite you.

Q. What temperature range can Koi survive?

A. From the high 30's to 90's. They are healthiest in the 70's. Temperatures in the 50's are worst since parasites are still active, but Koi immune systems are not.

Q. What's a bio-filter?

A. Bacteria that consume the waste of Koi (ammonia) and break it down into less harmful substances (nitrate). While we have something we may call a bio-filter, every wet surface in your pond is part of the bio-filter. The part specifically designated bio-filter is simply designed to pack more surface area into a small volume.

Q. How much sun do Koi need?

A. None. However, they are animals and they survive best in an environment that is as natural as possible and includes reasonable amounts of sun and shade. Your pond should not be a shadeless frying pan or a sunless cave. It's thought that Koi colors do not develop as well in an environment that does not include some natural sun light.

Q. Do I need to worry about predators?

A. Yes. A Koi pond is like a buffet to many predators such as: eagles, hawks, herons, kingfish, owls, racoons, snakes, etc. If you have any of these potential predators in your area, you need to protect your pond. Its amazing the boldness and ingenuity some predators will exhibit in getting to your tasty Koi. Predators also seem to find the most expensive Koi to be the most tasty (appetizers and desert always taste best, but cost the most).

Q. Are Koi just big goldfish?

A. No. Koi and goldfish were both originally bred from carp. Koi can breed with carp, but not with goldfish. Koi have barbels (wiskers), goldfish do not.