

# Selecting a Young Showa

*by Dr. Arthur Lembke*

Selecting a young showa is one of the toughest young koi to choose. Showas go through many changes as they grow. Many times the black is very deep and only comes out as the fish grows. For this reason, if you see gray areas, it might not be poor quality white but deep black that will appear later.

Start selecting a young showa, as with other young koi, by looking at the head. The head should have all 3 colors (red, black and white), preferably in equal amounts. Best would be to have a good kohaku head with either a lightening stripe or a v-shape in black on the top of the head. Many showas don't develop this until later, so just try to pick one that has good red and white with some black coming out.

Next look for a good kohaku pattern on the body. It should be balanced and be placed all through the body. Then check to see if black is either present or coming up all over the body. Don't worry if the black is of poor quality at an early age. Black develops later in most good quality showas. It is also okay to have an orange-red at this point because the red gets better as the fish grows.

The next very important thing to look for is the pectoral fins. Ideally, almost all of the pectoral fins, except for the outermost tips, should be black. As the pectoral fins grow out, the black seems to stay the same and the white area on the outside seems to spread out. If the pectoral fins are all black at this time, it is often alright, as this too can grow out to have good showa fins. Fins that are not acceptable are fins with any red, all white fins, or fins with very little black at the base. All other fins should preferably be white, but some black is acceptable. Red is not acceptable in the fins.

Look for a good, strong body, large pectorals, and a disease free fish. One must know how to pick a good kohaku and a good shiro utsuri to choose a good showa. If you take all the black away on a showa you should have a good kohaku and if you take all the red away you should have a good shiro utsuri.

Another thing to look for in this particular fish is the percentage of the 3 colors to the total fish. The classic showas used to be about 40% black, 40% red, and 20% white. The modern showas, that many judges like, have equal amounts of all 3 colors.

As you can see, the showas are one of the most difficult koi to select at a young age because they change so much as they grow.

It is this complexity that makes this one of my favorites of the varieties of koi.