

Taishio Sanshoku

Sanke are extremely popular with hobbyists in all countries and, along with Kohaku and Showa, are among the major prize winners in competitions. Their wide variety of patterns can give them a more individual appearance than Kohaku at first glance. The word Sanke literally means tri-color, the three colors being red, white and black. In Japanese Characters, the word Sanke is also read Sanshoku, the term used in early works on Koi.

History

The word Taisho refers to the period in Japanese history when the Sanke was first recorded, that is between 1912 and 1926. Sanke were among the first koi ever exhibited. A male Sanke was shown at the Tokyo Exhibition in 1914 where the Emperor's son saw koi for the first time. The names of the first breeders of the Sanke were never recorded, but as this koi was approximately 15 years old at that time, the first Sanke were probably produced at the end of the nineteenth century. Among the first Sanke ever recorded were those from Ojiya City, in Nigata, where they were found among Kohaku fry. They were then crossed with Shiro Bekko, thus forming one of the first distinct Taisho Sanke lines.

Colors

The Sanke is a three colored fish with hi (red) and sumi (black) markings on a white body. As with the Kohaku, the depth of these colors is very important. The white should be the color of snow - a yellowish white does not give a good background for the pattern to stand out and gives the fish a dull appearance.

The hi should be of the same quality as on a good Kohaku. It should be of deep hue and of uniform shade. The proportion of red to white should, again, be the same as on a good Kohaku. The base of any good Sanke pattern is a good Kohaku pattern. The sumi of a Sanke should be fine, uniform in shade and with good depth of color. It should be shiny in appearance. As sumi should overlay the Kohaku-style pattern, the markings need to be clearly defined in order to stand out.

Sumi can appear and disappear over the lifetime of a koi, and sumi of poor quality may be affected by water quality, temperature change and change of environment. Sumi markings on Sanke are also described by their position on the pattern of the koi, so sumi that appears on the white skin is known as "tsubo" sumi, while sumi that appears on the hi is known as "Kasane" sumi.

Patterns

Although Sanke differ from Kohaku in that they have three colors, the criteria by which the two varieties are judged are very similar.

Head

There should be no sumi on the head of the Sanke. The head pattern required is the same as on a Kohaku: that is a large U shaped hi marking, which should not extend down over the whole face. Unusual shaped head patterns are not so easily tolerated as on Kohaku, possibly because there is an extra color on the fish and a "busy" pattern lacks elegance and visual impact.

Body

Large hi markings are preferred down the length of the Sanke's body, complemented by sumi markings, which should also extend the length of the body. Sumi marks should start at the shoulder. Sumi markings should be small in number - an excessive amount of small sumi markings gives the koi an untidy appearance. AKA Sanke - This is a Sanke whose hi markings extend the length of the body. Maurten Sanke - This is a Sanke with a separate hi marking on the head.