

# BKKS NATIONAL SHOW 2008

## Growing-on from tosai to jumbo



**Mike Snaden**, from Yume Koi, has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of growing-on tosai Koi in the hope of nurturing a future jumbo Champion. He talks you through which appreciation points you should keep your eye on using photos of three fairly inexpensive Koi sold by Yume Koi...

It's that time of year again when, with great anticipation, you will have arrived at the BKKS National Koi Show hoping to see some of the best Koi outside Japan. Hopefully you will see large and small Koi of incredible beauty at the Show. However, visitors have a tendency to take jumbo Koi somewhat for granted, as the popular opinion is that all you have to do is simply buy such a Koi and take it to the Show for a guaranteed win. What people tend to forget is that a Koi that wins Grand Champion would probably have been

unsuitable for entry into a Koi show earlier in its life. You see, in general, the Koi that fall in the smaller sizes at a show are Koi that have finished earlier in life; if they were grown to jumbo size they would probably look well past their sell-by date. People tend to look at a small Koi like a Sanke or Showa and assume that it still qualifies as tategoi as it

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may have lots more sumi to come up. Although this may be the case, the Koi is probably also exhibiting beni that is at its peak and which will decline in condition well before all the underlying sumi comes up.

A jumbo Koi destined for excellence will usually be a very expensive one, even at a small size. ▶





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► It is very common for such Koi to cost in excess of ¥1 million, even as nisai. In this instance you are paying a 'future price', which is indicative of the fact that the breeder really doesn't want to sell it and would much prefer to grow it on themselves.

### Home growing

For me, the most enjoyable aspect of Koi keeping is growing these fantastic creatures on back in the UK.

This can be both extremely challenging and, thankfully, extremely rewarding.

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### Jumbo characteristics

If you wish to grow jumbo Koi in your own pond, there are a number of things that are very important in order to succeed. Naturally, genetics are incredibly important, as Koi can only be as good as the genes of the parent Koi. It is vital to understand parent size and quality, as well as trying to catch a glimpse of the older siblings of the prospective purchase in order to understand how the

Koi should look at the various stages of its life. Once you've established the genetics,

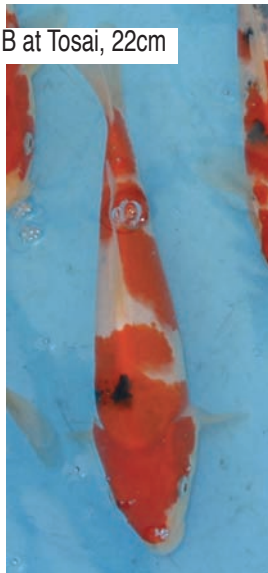
### Water myths

One of the things that all of the Koi in the group had in common, aside from being held in heated ponds, was that each of the Koi owners were incredibly dedicated to maintaining a healthy, if 'man-made' water chemistry, with all of them running very low TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) levels, along with very low KH and GH levels. Strangely, some people still seem to hold the opinion that water should be maintained with KH levels often above 5dH. Frankly, such levels serve no more purpose than a level of perhaps 2dH. Of course, if your water or filter management is inconsistent, then perhaps it is better to err on the side of caution. As for GH, this serves no real purpose whatsoever, and nothing is gained

Sanke A at Tosai, 28cm



Sanke B at Tosai, 22cm



Sanke C at Tosai



For a number of years now, I have been somewhat obsessed with growing Koi at a rate that is at least as good as the breeders in Japan can achieve. However, doing this, and keeping the condition of the Koi looking youthful, is extremely difficult, more often because people have a tendency to buy Koi with the wrong kind of qualities to begin with. The other failing hobbyists often fall prey to is an obsession with water clarity, rather than cultivating water conditions that may be much better for Koi.

This article is hopefully something that you will find inspiring and something that will make you want to get more from your hobby. It focuses on a group of inexpensive small tosai that we sold, and the results that the owner obtained when he grew them on.

you then have to look at the characteristics of the Koi in question in order to assess whether it can grow to jumbo size, and what its likely development traits will be as it grows. Head shape and length are among the most important factors, and 'body type' goes hand in hand with this when you're looking at a Koi that you think has the potential to grow to a good size. In this respect, you will notice certain traits in the head and body types of those Koi that grew best out of the group I'm focusing on here, as well as common traits of those that didn't grow at the same rate.

Hopefully this will give you some insight into what kind of tosai are easy to grow-on so that you'll be more confident the next time you go shopping.

from running anything more than trace levels of perhaps 2dH. In fact, the Japanese say that if a GH level is higher than 50ppm (2.8dH), then you should try to lower it. The trouble is, despite UK water already being too hard, many people advocate the use of mineral clays which only make things worse! Clays are of some use in ponds that are completely devoid of GH, but that's about it.

### Sanke A

Anyway, moving on to the group of fish. Sanke A measured 28cm as tosai in February 2004, 68cm last year as nisai, and hit the magic 80cm as sansai. This Koi may not be particularly pretty but she is of very high quality. I'd suggest you pay particular attention to the head of this Koi



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as tosa and you will see just how long the head was and how wide the mouth was – this is a very good tell-tale sign that it will get bigger.

The quality of this Koi is extremely good and she has attributes that would potentially be very good if you want to use her to breed from – however, the pattern on this Koi is very much 'love it or hate it'. This Koi now measures some 87cm and is just five-years old. Unfortunately, her owner has lost interest in Koi so she hasn't grown much in the last 12 months.

## Sanke B

Sanke B was bred by Takeda from an 84cm Hiroshima Sakai female crossed with a Momotaro 'Mako' male. This Sanke

also detracts from its desirability but, at £90, it was the cheapest Koi out of the group and is certainly still attractive in its own right.

Note the way that the kiwa has stretched out to the edge of some scales since the last photo. This may be something that some people will be happy about, but this development of secondary hi has also occurred elsewhere. Personally, I don't get too excited about kiwa that changes (by creeping to the outer edge of the scales) on a Koi, since it can also deteriorate just as easily when the Koi gets older.

## Sanke C

Sanke C is a sibling of Sanke B. You can clearly see that the head and body isn't as

huge price difference between what the breeder is prepared to sell them for as tosa or, indeed, whether the breeder is prepared to sell them at all.

## Jumbo enjoyment

With this in mind, I think that if your dream is to grow wonderful, quality jumbo Koi in your own pond, then it is better to compromise on pattern and concentrate on a Koi's quality and size potential. A Koi that has a pattern which might not look attractive when it's young can easily be overlooked but always remember that, in many cases, when the Koi is jumbo, and of extremely high quality with a great body, the eye will be drawn to the imposing nature of the beast rather than its pattern.

Sanke A at five years 87cm



Sanke B at six years 82cm



Sanke C at six years



measured 22cm in December 2002, 58cm in June 2004, 67cm at the time of the 2005 National and 74cm at the 2006 National. As of this year's BKKS Show, this Sanke measures 82cm at six-years old. This Koi's strongest point is its shiroji (white background). The shape of this Sanke's body is also very good.

Unfortunately, she has developed a little secondary hi and although the sumi appears to be good, it all sort of falls on top of the hi pattern – it can't be regarded as decent sumi and therefore lacks value. The menkaburi (hooded head)

good as with Sanke B, something which is really apparent if you take a look at the tosa photo. One thing worth pointing out here is that what appears to be a marginal difference between two Koi as tosa, will at some point become a much bigger difference when the two Koi grow up.

Despite being sisters, the difference in beni types as tosa has turned out to be a massive difference as the Koi have grown up –

Sanke C appears to have a slightly harder beni. Such differences may seem subtle to a hobbyist's eye, but will usually mean a

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My feelings about growing your own jumbo Koi from babies are that if you make the effort to do it, you will learn about Koi so much faster and be able to develop a much more thorough eye for spotting Koi that can be considered true tategoi. Growing Koi is extremely exciting and very rewarding. As your confidence grows, you will quite likely find yourself spending more money on high-risk tosa, but you'll be getting better results along the way.

Within the next two years I think we will start to see Koi that have been grown-on from tosa winning the BKKS National. Granted, not cheap tosa, but tosa nonetheless. Hopefully, people's thoughts about 'buying' a Grand Champion will be superseded by those of admiration. Let's keep our fingers crossed. ■