

# Get a Shovel

**BACKYARD FISH FOR FUN AND FOOD** by Dante Zuñiga-West

If you're the type of animal lover that doesn't want to really "pet" your pet, if you're allergic to felines, disliking of dogs or repulsed by reptilians, then fish are the way to go. And what better way to experience your fishy friends than in a natural setting, like an outdoor pond?

When thinking of an outdoor fish pond, images of fancy meditation gardens, giant water lilies and expensive manmade waterfalls come to mind. But you don't need to be stacked with cash to pull off having a nice outdoor pond setup. You can actually make it happen with a couple hundred bucks and some good old-fashioned yard work.

"It all starts with a hole in the ground," Aqua Serene employee James Whisman says. "Once you dig your hole, you can go with a preformed pond or pond liner."

Whisman can often be found running around the rear portion of the Aqua Serene store tending to the needs of customers who are trying to purchase or upgrade their pond equipment. He says that a small backyard fish pond is not very hard to maintain, and that many people have them.

It's cheapest to go with pond liner, as some of the preformed ponds can get a little spendy, like up to \$1,000. Pond liner — which is basically a very thick rubber membrane — goes for about 95 cents per square foot. So if you're backyard isn't something out of an *MTV Cribs* episode, don't worry. You can still score a 10 by 10 piece of liner for about \$100.

You'll need a filter and pump system. And although there are a multitude of systems out there, a small backyard pond can get away with only needing a simple drop-in filter and pump. You can pick one up online for \$100, or grab one in a store for slightly more. And just like that, you can be

the proud new owner of a backyard pond. Adding water will help. We suggest using a garden hose.

Once your pond is up and running, the last step is getting your new pets. Goldfish and koi are world-renowned favorites for outdoor ponds. These fish keep pretty well in our weird Oregon weather, and they make great pets; they eat stuff like wheat germ pellets and can be pretty friendly.

Her koi are kind of like friends, Junction City resident and fish lover Pat Straube says, "and they are really easy to take care of."

Straube has a large outdoor pond with seven koi, some of which are 3 feet long. She says that in the morning when she wakes up to feed her fish, they know she is approaching and swim to her. "They are very attentive and they like to

be cared for," she says.

Pets are wonderful, they provide affection, companionship and fulfillment. But let us not overlook the fact that we live in hard times. Macroeconomic recession, food shortages and evil factory farms are daunting realities. Sustainability is paramount and your backyard pond (and fish) can help make a difference, in terms of dinner.

According to Whisman, "In Oregon, raising tilapia or trout is your best bet."

Yes, that backyard pond could be your backyard surplus of tasty organic food. Just make sure if you're farming trout to get a big strong pump. Trout need moving water, or their meat becomes mushy. As for the tilapia, you will need to obtain a permit from ODFW, as they are a controlled species of fish in Oregon.

To be clear, we aren't condoning the eating of pets. We're just pointing out that outdoor fishponds are a world of fun and opportunity. So go check out your backyard, grab a shovel and get the hose.

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KOI

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Ruby

**CUTEST**



Winston Churchill and Bartholomew all dressed for the Sabbath

**BEST DRESSED**



No Name Submitted

**UGLIEST**



Amy the Angry Reindeer

**HONORABLE MENTION**