

*The fun and easy way® to
choose and care for the colorful and unusual Koi*

Koi

FOR

DUMMIES®



R.D. Bartlett

*Former columnist, Tropical Fish Hobbyist
magazine*

Patricia Bartlett

Author of Reptiles and Amphibians For Dummies

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®

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Koi For Dummies

**by R.D. Bartlett and
Patricia Bartlett**



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R. D. Bartlett began his pet fish-keeping when he netted minnows out of the brooks near Springfield, Massachusetts. He moved to Florida and began working as the general manager for Aquarium Supply, a tropical fish, goldfish, and koi wholesaler, and then opened his own pet shop.

Patricia Bartlett grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and began keeping fish at age 10. She has journeyed to Costa Rica and Peru to net and write about angelfish, discus, and knife fish. She is a recent convert to the wonderful world of koi.

The Bartletts have co-authored numerous pet care books, mostly centering on reptiles and amphibians.

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Introduction

Welcome to Koi For Dummies,

What's so much fun about koi? They're gorgeous fish, and they've been selectively bred for more than a hundred years for color, pattern, size, and harder-to-pin-down qualities like grace in swimming or personality. They're the fish version of lilies of the field, perfect on their own merits. For years they've been called *living jewels*, although we, your authors, find that term a bit on the syrupy side.

Nothing quite compares with koi. Parrots are pretty and can tame down, but they're noisy. Orchids are attractive, we'll grant you that. But after an orchid's bloomed, the pretty stuff's over for a couple of months. And we haven't seen an orchid yet that takes food from our fingers or rolls over to have its belly gently rubbed.

So these are some of the reasons we find koi so much fun. We hope you will, too.

About This Book

We want you to think of this book as a reference you can turn to at any time and find exactly the kind of info you

need, so we wrote it in a modular fashion; each chapter and each section within it is self-contained and self-explanatory. You don't need to wade through 12 pages of water stratification theory to find out how to warm up or cool down your pond, and you don't need to know water flow rates to select a filter. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of koi-keeping, even starting with the commitment question: "Do you, Reader, take this koi . . . ?" No, sorry, we meant, "Do you, Reader, want to spend 20 minutes twice a day enjoying your koi and your koi pond?" (Of course you do, and likely you'll want to spend more!)

We hope this book clears up any questions that may have been holding you back, like how to build a pond and how big it should be, what good water quality means and how to achieve it in a pond full of fish, and how to get the best koi for your money (which sometimes doesn't take much money at all).

Although good science is behind this book, we don't bombard you with stuffy abstracts and technical writing that would both panic and bore you to tears. We want you to have fun and keep turning these pages because it's good entertainment and you're discovering some precious nuggets of information. We want you to have fun with koi because we have fun with koi, and everyone we know who keeps koi does so for the fun of it.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate easily through this book, we set up a few conventions that we use consistently throughout:

- ✓ Anytime we want to highlight new words or terms that we define in the text, we *italicize* them.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text indicates the action part of numbered steps, the keywords of a bulleted list, or text we suggest you type into a search engine for more information.
- ✓ We use monofont for Web sites and e-mail addresses.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If you come across these instances, rest assured that we haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. To use one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending the line break doesn't exist.

What You're Not to Read

We tried to keep the technical stuff to a minimum because we don't like it either, but sometimes it just snuck in when we weren't looking and we couldn't winkle it out. If you see a paragraph flagged by a

Technical Stuff icon and you go cross-eyed, skip right past it. Keep in mind, though, that these paragraphs do contain helpful bits of info for koi-keepers who want to go the extra mile or expand their arsenal of koi knowledge.

You also don't have to read sidebar text, which we place in gray boxes. Sidebars contain helpful and often interesting info, but you can be sure all the need-to-know stuff is in the regular text.

Foolish Assumptions

We think we know you — a bit. Maybe we're totally off-kilter, but here's what we assumed about you when writing this book:

- ✓ You like nature, you like bright colors, and you may have had an aquarium in your past. Now you're ready for something a lot larger, but that *something's* got you stymied.
- ✓ You know the basics — koi are fish, fish need water, fish need food. But you're wondering: How do you ramp up to a 1,600-gallon pond? How do you move a fish that's 20 inches long? Are the \$200 koi better than the \$20 koi?
- ✓ You'd like a fish that's somewhat more responsive than the ones you've seen swimming about in typical aquariums.

✓ You like the idea of a fish pet that can live for several decades.

Sit down, you're in the right spot. We're here to eliminate the guesswork.

How This Book Is Organized

This book has four main parts, each dealing with a different aspect of koi-keeping. Each part is divided into several chapters, all relating to that part's topic. We're all about practicality here — just pick your topic, find the part, and voila! You have the right chapters. Here's what the parts cover.

Part I: Koi Basics

This is the starter stuff — how koi developed, the names of the different color varieties, what it takes (time- and money-wise) to keep koi, and a bunch of insider info on getting the best koi deals. You find out how big koi get and get some clues about their growth rates.

Part II: Living with Koi, Inside and Out

So it looks like you've made the right decision — you want to keep koi. But now what? This part is oriented toward materials and pond construction. You find out what supplies you need; how to plan, build, and landscape a pond; and how to maintain a pond when it's up and running. We even have a chapter on setting up a koi pond inside the house. If you like koi, you'll find this chapter very useful. An indoor pond is a good way to occupy the empty bedroom your kids vacated when they went off to college — and it prevents them from moving back home when they graduate.

Part III: Caring for Koi and Keeping Them Healthy

You are what you eat, and koi are no different. This part tells you about koi nutrition and the different components in koi diets. You find out what to feed koi (and even what form to use) at different times of the year. We provide a recipe so you can make some of your own koi food, and yes, you can snack on it as you make it. Puree of collard greens, green peas, and crab meat are quite tasty — before you add the tubifex worms.

This part also covers the more common koi diseases (though you'll never see most of them) as well as the real koi killer — stress — and how to diffuse it.

Part IV: The Big Leagues: Koi Breeding and Showing

Gosh, look at the math: One not-very-fancy koi costs \$15; a female lays 50,000 eggs; raise these babies for six months and you have a near-instant fortune in that pond. What a great deal!

Okay, there's a lot more to breeding koi than that, so this part provides some realism to the picture. We talk about breeding koi, raising the young, and the continuous culling that's essential to the process. We also talk about koi shows — why they're so much fun and how you can benefit even if you don't enter the competitions.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Some people like to see how a book turns out, so they start at the back. In this book you won't find out the butler did it, but you will find more useful stuff condensed down to lists. Have you ever idly wondered what on earth you'd do if you lost power for a week, now that your pond's up and running? Chapter 17 has some ideas that may save the day for you and your koi. Need to know whether your koi are getting sick? Run through the list in Chapter 18.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, we use icons in the margins to focus your attention on certain types of information. Here are the icons you'll see and a short description of each.



This is important stuff, stuff you need to keep in mind. None of it is very difficult.



These are details that a water-soaked koi-keeper thrives on. Skip them if technical stuff makes you sleepy.



These are points or shortcuts that can make life easier for your koi or maybe for you.



Think of this as that sideways look you got from your mom one millisecond before her hand flew out and smacked you on top of your head when you said

something out of line. These warnings mean the same thing: Stop right there if you know what's good for you (and your koi).

Where to Go from Here

Like other books in the *For Dummies* series, this is a reference book. Pick a topic and head for the index or table of contents. Both of them give you the page numbers so you can turn to the info you need. If you want to know about koi diets, you don't have to skim a chapter called *Everything about Koi* until you find what you need — instead you just go to the chapter titled *Koi Nutrition 101* . For info on those little white spots on your neighbor's koi, look at Chapter 13 on koi ailments — then take this book to him so he can help his fish get rid of the little buggers!

The watery world of koi lives in front of you. Jump in! Start with the cartoons, read a chapter, or check out the index. It's all here at your fingertips.