

## KOI SELECTING FOR SHOW OR POND AND HOW ARE THEY JUDGED

To understand how Koi are selected for pond or show, you must first understand how they are judged. Koi are judged based on:

CONFORMATION

COLOR

PATTERN

QUALITY

IMPOSING APPEARANCE

All Koi are judged based on these five elements, regardless of the variety. The only difference would then be the individual standards for that variety.

### CONFORMATION

Conformation includes the body shape, the proportions of the body, finnage, head shape, width at the eyes and shoulders and so on. Differences in body occur at different ages of Koi and we must recognize this proper development over time. The proper body can show power and elegance at the same time. As a Koi matures the body becomes that much more important. When young, pattern and color is more important, but when a Koi gets older it must show power.

The Head should be wide and the nose should be rounded. If the nose is too pointy the fish will lack elegance. The forehead area should have a gradual decent from the shoulder to the nose. If it cuts too quickly down the head looks more like a shark. The forehead should be slightly convex, not flat. Faces, around the cheeks, can be rounded or more squared at the jaw depending on bloodline but both are OK. There is a perfect triangle that the eyes and nose form that you will recognize as you get more experience. If the nose is too short or long it can through off the conformation. This triangle is almost an equilateral triangle. Look at pictures of Show winners and study this.

The Body is said to be Torpedo Shaped. The widest part, if looking down, is between the back of the gill plates to the leading ray of the dorsal fin. If the widest point is at the gills and cuts back too fast to the tail, then the fish has no power. If the widest part extends back further than this, then the Koi has a chubby type appearance and this too lacks power. The tail tube should be thick to depict power. From the side you would follow the same rules without the stomach hanging down to much. If the lowest point is under the gills then the Koi is said to be pigeon chested. Choman is a stomach disorder where the stomach hangs down at the back the furthest. The stomach should be carried in a muscular way rather than a flabby way. Make sure the spine is straight. Watch it swim and see if everything is carried straight. Also look from the side to see if the fish carries itself properly. Make sure the head or tail is straight out and not facing up or down.

Fins are very important too. The pectoral fins should be wide almost like angel wings to give elegance. Large pectorals are good as long as they are in proportion. They should have strong edges, not frayed. Check the leading rays to make sure they extend all the way out to the end. Sometimes these are trimmed if damaged. Make sure all fins are there and not damaged. The Dorsal fin should have a strong front ray and when in a raised position should have no holes or show any signs of past fin rot. The tail should be powerful and not wispy. The anal fin is subject to damage by fin rot and netting so check it. Look for any signs of scar tissue from previously broken fins.

## COLOR

Color is a product of genetics, bloodline, pond conditions, age and to some extent sex of the Koi. Good water will bring out good color. If genetics are not good then good water will not matter. And if genetics are good and the water poor, then you still get bad results.

Color has to be uniform throughout the fish. All the whites, reds, blacks, Matsuba, blues have to be the same on all parts of the fish. There should not be any windows in the color. Color should exist in clear groupings of at least three scales large. Color must have thickness. It should be clear and not dirtied by spots. You should not see white between the colors as the fish moves. Color should have a healthy gloss and not be dull. When Koi are young the color is thinner and the scales are more opaque. This is why we see more blurred Sashi (leading edge of pattern clarity) at an earlier age and when the scale gets thicker it tightens up. Young, immature females can have a more yellow appearance to the skin from carotene in the skin, but as they mature the carotene goes to egg production and the skin gets more white.

Color and body is what you always look for whether you are buying Show Koi or Pond Koi. The difference between a pond Koi and a Show Koi is that the Show Koi has a good pattern and higher skin quality which makes it more valued. The difference between an Expensive Show Koi and a Very Expensive Show Koi is the degree of the skin quality and small elegance points that are sought after by collectors. It may be a different arrangement of color near the tail, it might be a Head Pattern, it might be the placement of color around the dorsal. There are many things in Koi Appreciation that value a Koi.

## PATTERN

Pattern is very important in selecting Show Koi. Pattern has its own rules in the different varieties. The one thing that is common, amongst all the varieties, is that the pattern must be balanced. Balanced from left to right and balanced from front to back. For true balance if the Koi is divided, front to back in thirds, rather than halves, all sections should be balanced. If all the color is in the front we call it front heavy, if in the back, it is called back heavy. Pattern should have a good edge. The trailing edge is called kiwa at the back of the red or black color, where it touches the white. It should be very sharp looking and can be full scaled Maruzome or follow a straight line in the case of Kamisori kiwa. If the red or black is thick enough it will cover the scale behind it, which is white, very well. Therefore, giving the clean trailing edge.

The front edge of the pattern where it is overlapped by white is called Sashi. Sashi takes longer to clear as it takes more years for the white scale to thicken to cover the darker scale underneath. Many times, on a high quality Shiro Utsuri, where the second color is intense black, the Sashi never becomes totally straight. The black is so thick, that the white can never cover it up. Therefore sometimes an unclear sashi can be acceptable if the color is real thick, but even then the sashi must be of uniform thickness. Say one or two scale.

As you see, there is a whole appreciation for Kiwa and Sashi. These are much harder to attain on Wagoi(scaled) Koi than Doitsu (scaleless). For this reason, Wagoi are more

valued than Doitsu. The harder it is for the Koi to attain that perfect look, the more valued.

Colors must be in the right proportion on the Koi. Larger patterns on a large fish seem to give a vision of power. Small patterns on small fish are said to be cute. Small patterns on a large fish lack elegance and show weakness. After all the Koi is a symbol of strength in the Japanese culture.

Patterns that wrap deeply around the fish, called Maki, are said to show a more powerful look. Nose and tail color, ending the same, tend to frame a Koi and give elegance. A pattern that travels around the dorsal fin rather than through it, is elegant. Deep insertions of color that have many edges to show the clarity of kiwa are preferred. On the fish where it is harder to attain perfection, it is more prized when they are perfect. Sort of like bonus points for being difficult. The prize is in the journey or challenge. If a fish is easier to breed, say like an Ogon or Shusui, then they are less valued and considered less elegant. A complex fish like a wagoi Showa is highly valued when everything is just right.

Pattern needs interest to get your attention. It is said to be like a "Japanese Garden". First the head pattern draws you into the garden. Then the shoulders and the power draw you in so you want to see more. Then you travel a path and if the end of the trail, is just like the beginning, it rounds out your journey.

## QUALITY

Quality has many ways to be seen. Quality may be in skin and skin texture. The skin should be smooth. The scales should be slightly convex to reflect light outward toward the viewer's lens. If a scale is flat or concave, as in older Koi skin, the skin lacks luster. Quality can be in depth of color. Quality can be in the shine of the skin, which can be attributed to the Guanine in the skin. Quality can be in the softness of a color and how it appears to the eye. Quality can also be in one's mind, from different exposures to Koi over the years. Perception of quality can be just as interesting to study as tangible quality. Females are more valued as Koi get older. This is because the skin tends to maintain this softness and texture longer than the males. Males' skin tends to peak at a much earlier age and is shorter lived. Looking at quality and being able to properly value a Koi, as far as price, comes with many years' experience. It is a tough concept to learn and to explain. How is a \$15,000 Koi different than a \$30,000 Koi. Some people can't tell and unless you know, there may be no difference. Just a breeder asking too much money for his Koi. The old saying comes to mind when people ask me to explain quality. "I know it when I see it"

## IMPOSING APPEARANCE

Here, what most people think, is the biggest Koi wins, but that is not always the case. Big does not have anything to do with imposing. Have you ever seen a long large skinny fish? It is not a pleasant sight. This is where that word "Power" comes in. It helps to be big to show power but the body must also be wide and muscular. A fish can be many inches smaller, than a larger fish, and still have more power. Power emanates from many things. Most of all it has to do with body conformation. However, as we talked about earlier, pattern can also show power. Any wimpy pattern can spoil it for a large fish. Body

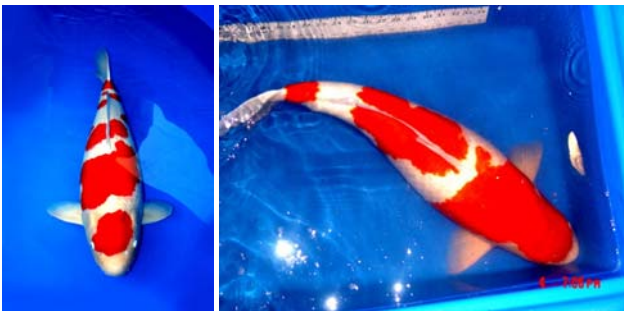
proportion can show power. Large pectorals and tail show power. Wide shoulders show power. High body form, at the shoulders, shows power. Thick tail joint shows power. Not only the body, but how a fish presents itself when swimming is important. It should swim level. Not head up or tail up. It should display its fins out, not be clamped by its sides. It should be saying “look at me” while you are walking by the tank. So as you can see, there are many things that can depict power. It does not always have to be the largest fish. One can also see that, with these requirements for power, in the larger sizes, that females will have the edge as far as having more of these attributes.

Above, are all the Judging standards that are common to all varieties. These will be the same things you look for when purchasing and looking at Koi. When purchasing Show Koi all the above five features should be sought after into one neat package. When buying pond Koi, some of these features become less important, to drop the price where you are comfortable. Body is always important and for viewing, color is always important. These should never be compromised. The other three Judging standards are where things need to drop off to lower the price of a Koi. Hopefully within these shortcomings, you can find a Koi that is still pleasing to watch for you, if you are just interested in pond Koi.

## VARIETY STANDARDS

Now I would like to discuss the standards that we Judge that are unique to each variety. Most of these differences are in the patterns that are acceptable within the variety. All of the other Judging standards are uniform to all Varieties.

### **KOHAKU**



This is that red pattern on white Koi. The old” begins and ends” fish. Well, for you Asagi lovers, Kohaku originated out of Asagi back in the early 1800’s. The Asagi with the red on the sides. As they selected Asagis that the red came on top of and lighter blue patterns, so the Kohaku was born. One must understand the Kohaku patterns, that govern the standard, to understand Sanke ,Showa, Goshiki, Koromo and other varieties. Many Kohakus are produced by the major breeders. It is the intense competition to produce this variety that drives the interest and the value in this Koi. It is the stepping stone of Koi.

Hi on this fish should be of the same intensity and thickness through out the body. The orange/ red base Hi, is more prized than the more purple maroon shade. The harder red tends to finish earlier and does not maintain show quality as long. There should be no

white single or double scale windows in the hi, called mado. Also no lighter orange scales inside the pattern, called kokesuki. It is a two color Koi so no sumi spots or Shimi should be present. As the Koi moves you should not see white between the edges of the red scales. Sometimes there may be a hikari type sheen on the skin between the scales and this is called fukurin. Fukurin can be very attractive and give the fish a sheen. If there is only select fukurin in some areas, then it can be distracting, almost like separate Gin scales.

The white should be like snow white. Any yellowing of the white is distracting and can be an indication of poor water quality or possibly too much spirulina in the diet. There should be an area of white that separates the hi pattern from the tail fin. This is called odome. Ideally the pectoral fins are white, but can have a touch of hi at the base if it is tight to the body and not distracting. This is called motoaka. No sumi in pectorals.

The sashi or leading edge of the Hi pattern should be uniform. It can be perfectly separated or it can be slightly blurred if not too much. The area of overlap, that we see, should be uniform, if present, say one scale wide. It should not distract.

Head pattern is important. The Hi on the head should come down far enough on the head to approach the nares or nose holes. It can extend out to the eyes. If it passes or touches the eyes it is better if the eye remains white. If the eyelid is red, the pupil should never be red. If too much red is on the head or covers the whole head, the Koi lacks elegance. If the Hi remains back further on the head than the nares, sometimes a nose hi can balance that. If hi extends down the head to the mouth it is better if the Hi extends to the side a little, to give a color contrast. If the hi extends straight down the head to the nose it makes the face appear long and pointy. This is called hanatsuki.

White on the shoulder is good in the pattern, cutting into the Hi pattern. It better displays the contrast of the color and creates interest. It is the center of the painting we are creating. Dorsal fins look more elegant if they are cut out in white rather than red. If red extends up to the top of the dorsal it is said to be heavy and less elegant. The tail should be white. Color should be balanced from side to side and front to back. If you are looking to show the Kohaku at a large size, then I would suggest a more wrapping Hi pattern or Makibara. It can give a perception of power and girth.

The pattern should be all in large groupings and have no single hi scales called tobi hi. The power comes from the shoulder area so that is where the largest part of the pattern should be located. This portion of Hi is called the Hiban or major hi.

For show, do not buy a Doitsu Koi. These are not highly prized, and with no three dimensional edge to the color, lacks elegance again. As far as pattern, it is said that Koi with bolder more continuous patterns grow more as they are closer to the earlier genetics, than Kohaku, with step patterns. It is believed the more steps a koi has, the less it grows. More inbreeding to get many steps. At least that is the theory proposed. As a guide select a fish that is about 70-80% Hi. Young Kohaku should have white eyelids. This way you know there is not Sanke in its lineage. If they have Sanke in the family tree they would have blue eyelids and tend to put out more Shimi as they grow.

## **SANKE**



A Sanke is a Kohaku that has a black pattern on top. Specifically, a Bekko type, black pattern. You must first find a good Kohaku as above, if you disregard the Sumi. Then the sumi has to be added in just the right places. We will discuss the Bekko later, but if you take away the Hi, what is left should be a perfect Bekko.

The Head is very important. It should be the same as the Kohaku head. There should be no black on it. In modern types there has been a tendency to allow some black on the head if it is of high quality. It should just be at the shoulder. If it is there, it must not detract from the rest of the pattern and should maintain the balance of color. Eyelids on Sanke should be blue.

The first sumi patch from front to back should be on the shoulder. It should be to one side of the shoulder. For this reason it is called Kata-Sumi. Kata means side. This again is the center of our picture we are creating and should be a high quality focal point of all three colors. If there is no black until back further on the fish, it looks elongated and out of balance. This shoulder sumi is very important and I will not buy one without it anymore. The rest of the sumi should be in a nice balanced pattern. It needs to be balanced side to side and from front to back with this Kata-Sumi. Preferably we like to see the black in the white areas so as not to lessen the effect of the Kohaku. Remember that all begins and ends with Kohaku.. The sumi should all be above the lateral line of the fish. It should not wrap the body, which is a characteristic of the Showa. Sanke sumi used to be a more faded sumi, but in modern times the Sanke have been breed back to some Showa and the sumi has gotten better in quality. It is this same cross-breeding that is giving some Sumi on the heads of Sanke. The sumi should be either the eggplant bluish, shiny black called Urushi Sumi or it should be black-black called Kuro Sumi. Grey sumi is not desired and called Nabe Sumi. The black should be even along the whole fish. Hi as in the Kohaku should be around 70% of the color and the sumi about 10%. If buying these young, select a good kohaku at the beginning with little black. Make sure the black is coming on the shoulder for ultimate balance. Now as it grows, you can watch the black come up stronger each season. If there is too much black at the beginning, then the fish may be too black to have elegance as it grows. Hi finishes normally before the black. Avoid Sanke with many speckles. Stick with defined sumi patches. Pectoral fins should be white or can have some sumi stripes called Tejima. If it has Tejima it should be not more than 3 stripes per pectoral and they should be closely matched. The tail may also have sumi stripes, but a white tail is considered more graceful. All three colors should exist in the region from the back of the dorsal to the tail, which is called the Ozuke region.

All in all, the three colors must exist in balance. Balance left to right and front to back. Also when truly finished, all three colors should be fully developed at the same time. Good Kohaku, plus good Bekko equals good Sanke.

## SHOWA



Showa is also a Kohaku, that has a black pattern on top. This time, however, we have a different type of black. Now instead of Bekko black, we have Utsuri black. Again Utsuri will be discussed later. Also, again, you must start with that perfect Kohaku. The word, Kohaku, sure comes up a lot. Take the perfect Kohaku and add the black in the right places and you have Showa. Showa is a combination of a good Kohaku and a good Shiro Utsuri.

The head on a Showa is very important. This time the head must have black on it. In fact it must have all three colors on it. The shoulder area of the fish should have all three colors and the Ozuke, tail region, should also have all three. Many Showa are missing the white in the face, but white softens the look for elegance. Classic head patterns start with a good Kohaku face. Then black comes either down the face to divide it, or down the face and across the shoulder to form a Y. This is called Hachiware.

The sumi on the fish should be strong. It should look like it emanates from the bottom of the fish and properly wrap the body. It is this wrapping of color that gives the Showa the look of strength. There is no more powerful fish than a good Showa. It has double power in the wrapping of red and black. It also has the high contrast of three colors. After the head, the rest of the sumi should be bold and balanced. Look closely at body conformation because of all the black. The black can hide defects in body, mouth and head.

Pectoral fins should have Sumi at the base, up against the body. This is called Motoguru. Ideally it should come out about one third of the pectoral length. Also the most perfect motoguru is surrounded by white. The front ray of the pectoral is white. The sumi does not go to the tip and the back ray is white. Strong motoguru is an indication that the sumi will be stable as the Koi grows. Dorsal fin is best in white as is the tail, but black in them can be fine. Avoid brush sumi pectorals, which looks more like stripes, or solid black pectorals. Even on young koi, the pectorals should start having the sumi pull back. Some modern Showa have clear fins, as Kohakus are bred back in the crosses to brighten the red. See you must get back to that perfect Kohaku always. Nose sumi also adds to the elegance of Showa and makes it more powerful.

Again look for luster in the color. No windows should appear in the Hi or sumi. It should have good edge to the color in Sashi and Kiwa. Speckled black is poor quality.



Be careful in buying a Showa. With all the inbreeding, body deformities are very common. Mouth and head deformities top the list as well as spine deformities. Good Showa are sometimes hard to find. Even in Showa crossed with Showa, there is only about a 30% spawn of Showa. Then to get the clarity and the balance, and proportion of color, is very tough.

## UTSURIMONO



Hi Utsuri



Ki Utsuri



Shiro Utsuri

Utsuri are two colored fish. It has a white, red or yellow base with a black pattern on top. Sorry no Kohaku here. The white is called a Shiro Utsuri, the red called a Hi Utsuri and the yellow called a Ki Utsuri. If using the Koi for Show, always get a Shiro Utsuri as they do better in competition. The Hi Utsuri and Ki Utsuri tend to have more sesame(speckled) sumi as they grow. The reason the Japanese prefer Shiro Utsuri is because of the higher contrast of the color against each other. Shiro is more refined and therefore more elegant.

The head must have both colors. The black pattern is exactly as we discussed above on the Showa. It can be a sumi line dividing the face or that Y Hachiware line. 50% black and 50% white are good proportions for the face. This is also a good rule of thumb for the rest of the body although more or less black is acceptable. Too much black is less acceptable than little black. Again the contrast of the lighter color tends to show off the fish more.

More complex patterns are prized here as one can better see the contrast and edge of color throughout the fish. Black should wrap the body for strength and boldness. A fish with black, just above the lateral line would be a bekko. Utsuri black comes from underneath. Black should be in large patches, not speckled. No single scale sumi should exist. As with other varieties, the colors of the fish should be in all three vital regions. The background color and black need to both be in the face, the shoulder area and in the Ozuke region. This gives the true balance and elegance we are looking for. This with the boldness of black wrapped around the Koi gives both power and grace.

Pectoral fins and other fins are just like Showa. Same rules. Motoguru is the best for pectorals. White fins are best for dorsal and tail.

Eyes on the Shiro Utsuri many times have blue eyelids. This adds to the elegance. Many Shiro Utsuri's come from Showa crosses, so be careful you do not find a third color. Sometimes you can check this from the bottom of the fish. If Showa x Showa is bred, it many times has orange on the stomach. If Shiro x Shiro is bred, the stomach is white.



In this variety, because of the high contrast of black and white on the Shiro Utsuri we have the most forgiving variety when it comes to blurred Sashi. In fact Sumi Sashi, of one to two scales, is looked at, as strong sumi. It is said that the sumi is so thick that the white can never cover it up. If we have this Sashi it is fine, but it should be uniform. Not all over the place.

Utsuri are very popular like the Showa, because of the bold appearance of strength, combined with the elegance of the contrast.

## BEKKO



Ki Bekko



Aka Bekko



Shiro Bekko

A Bekko is a two color fish. The base is either white, red, or yellow. Black is inserted on the back, on top of this color in sort of a stepping stone or checkerboard pattern. All the black is above the lateral line, unlike the Utsuri where the black wraps underneath. The three types are Shiro Bekko (most popular for Show), Aka Bekko, and Ki Bekko.

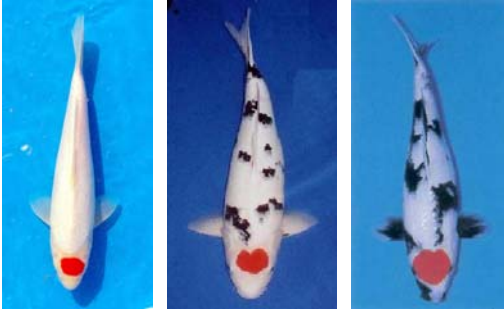
The head in this is just a good solid base color. There should be no black on the head. The head should have very thick coloring of white, red or yellow. It should have no speckling. The skull structure should be totally covered. There should be no gray color sneaking through. As talked about in the Conformation, the head must be the perfectly shaped. There is no color on the head now to hide any defects so it is important.

The background color, I suggest white for Show, should be snow white. The black should be evenly placed and balanced like stepping stones in a garden. The first sumi spot should be on one side of the shoulder, as we saw in Kata Sumi, for a Sanke. All sumi should be in larger blocks of at least 2 scale size. No single Shimi type sumi. Best black is that Urushisumi which has a bluish cast and again some bluish Sashi is acceptable in this fish as long as it is even. Eyelids on Bekko should be blue from their Sanke lineage.

Fins should be white, but can have the Tejima stripes like in Sanke. Eyes, preferably, should have a blue eyelid to depict its Sanke lineage. Most all Bekko come from Sanke breeding.

The body is very important on a Bekko because the pattern itself does not generate power. It is not one of the most popular varieties, because others, like Shiro Utsuri, with the same colors, look more powerful and bold.

## TANCHO



Tancho      Tancho Sanke      Tancho Showa

A Tancho is a white based fish with Hi only on the head. Then there are three combinations depending on if there is sumi at all and how it is placed. The white fish with red on the head and no other color is called Tancho Kohaku. The white Koi with red on the head and a bekko pattern of black on the back is called Tancho Sanke, not Tancho Bekko. A Tancho Sanke has three colors as a Sanke. Now a white Koi with red on the head and utsuri black on it is called a Tancho Showa. Again a three color fish like Showa.

For show Tancho, the red spot on the head is very important. It should be only on the head and not on the shoulders. It should be centered between the eyes, but not touch them. It should go down to the nares, but not touch them. Now for elegance the rounder that spot the better. There are other tancho shapes. Square are called Kakutan and cross-shaped are called Juji. However, these are just for fun. Round is where it is at. White again should be snow white.

Fins on these should be either clear for a Tancho Kohaku, clear or striped for a Tancho Sanke. Or motoguru for a Tancho Showa.

On Tancho Kohaku where there is no color on the back of the fish, the body becomes very important. It must be perfect and have good scalation without any scars. To have the most impact for Show it should be female. White on Tancho bodies tend to easily show stress and get red streaks when moved to different water. This is why I prefer to show Tancho Showa and then Tancho Sanke, so you have a third color to hide any body defects or stress.

Tancho Sanke and Tancho Showa are the most liked in Shows because of the added dimension of a third color. Black adds more power. All the rules of bekko or utsuri apply when it comes to the sumi on these fish. Take a good Tancho Kohaku and add a good Bekko pattern or a good Utsuri pattern to it, and you have good Tancho Sanke and Showa. Again for the most bold and powerful impact, you can not beat a good Tancho Showa. Tancho Kohaku can be imposing if the body is huge but the other two types of Tancho are preferred if all is equal. Black needs to be finished though, as the third color, which make these more challenging.

## **ASAGI/SHUSUI**



Asagi Tosai



Shusui Tosai



Asagi Adult



Shusui Adult

Asagi and Shusui are blue Koi with a scale reticulation in a darker blue. The wagoi, (scaled) variety, is the Asagi and the doitsu variety, is Shusui. The Shusui can have a row of dark scales along the back or it may have no scales at all. Red normally appears on the sides of the body, sides of the head, pectorals and fins. Pectorals can appear as motoaka with red joints against the body or full red fins. Both are acceptable if balanced. Wagoi is preferred for the three dimensions of scale presentation. The Asagi, as long as it is good always beats the Shusui. So if buying for Show think Asagi,

The head should be a clean white or slightly bluish white. It should not be yellow or cloudy. The sides of the head look best if framed evenly in Hi, from side to side. The nose should be white. This is generally an indication that the head will stay nice. If the nose is cloudy then the head is more likely to become cloudy. Young Asagi can show brain pan, which is skull structure through the head that may disappear or not. The blue and the Fukurin do not develop till the Asagi reaches three years old. So if looking for Show Asagi, it may be best to start with Sansai. Asagi also tend to get darker as they grow, so it would be better to buy a light pattern when growing one out. Another reason to choose Sansai, which are more developed.

Pectorals can be all red or have motoaka. The tail can be clear or red. Again it is all about balance or power. Hi on the sides of the fish are different for the two types. On Asagi, the red on the side should come up to the lateral line and stop. It should not go into the netting pattern on the top, The dorsal fin can be clear or red. If the dorsal has red, the Hi in the fish tends to be more stable, as far as intensity and also, as far as remaining on the sides below the lateral line. My quote is that” the red on the dorsal scares the side red back”. On Shusui the red can come just up to the lateral line. It can come up past the lateral line and stop before the dorsal. Or it can come all the way up and include the dorsal. The most popular is the second, where we see the red above the lateral line but not to the dorsal. On Shusui the pattern of red should be balanced. If dorsal scales are present on the Shusui, then they should be evenly placed in matched sets all the way along the

top ridge. We sometimes refer to this as the “rack”. The rack should be even, all dark blue, and have no waste scales or Mudo Scales, outside the rack. Sometimes, this can be perfect, and then the Shusui has a chance to beat an Asagi, but not often. If you want to Show in this class, buy Asagi.

On Asagi the netting pattern of blue is very important on the back. It should have no scars. Scars are very visible on this pattern. The netting should go all the way up to the shoulder crease and be even. The coloration should be even throughout the net and background blue color. The areas between the scales will have almost a fukurin glow on high class Asagi. Gin Rin scales scattered on the back of an Asagi can be very distracting. Gin Rin Asagi are coming out, but mostly for foreign markets. Not for Show. One scale cannot carry that many things. Blue, net, gin, etc. Gin just distracts from the net.

Be careful with Asagi and Shusui as they grow. They can get speckled with shimi or Jyami as they get older, especially in hard water. These fish do better in soft water over time.

The collectors joke about Asagi a lot because it is not a contender for Grand Champion, but a truly high class Asagi is a beautiful fish and can be pricey.

## **KOROMO/GOSHIKI**



Ai Goromo    Budo Goromo    Sumi Goromo    Goshiki

This is a very complex class. It all revolves around a black netting reticulation called a robe that covers part, or all, of the pattern of a fish. If you take a Kohaku, Sanke or Showa and put the black reticulation only over the red and not the white, you have a Koromo. If you take the same three varieties and put a black robe over both the red and the white, then it is called a Traditional Goshiki. If you take a Kohaku, and place the black on top of the white only and not the red, you have a Modern Goshiki.

Koromo come in three types. The Ai Goromo, Sumi Goromo, and Budo Goromo. The Ai Goromo, has the black robe over the Hi, on the body and not the head. This robe reticulation is called Amine or ami for short. The word means net. This black reticulation ideally covers the outer one third of the scale. The coloration caused by the robe, on an Ai Goromo, has almost a blue hue to it. Hence, the word Ai, which means blue. If all the quality is close, in this class, Ai Goromo rules this class.

The Sumi Goromo has a darker cast of black over just the red and the black is on the head as well. It is more black than blue. The Budo Goromo has a more, purple-blue coming out from the robe and the edging being scalloped almost looks like grapes. Hence, the word Budo, which means grape.

The standards for Goromo come from the Kohaku. What else? All the rules for the Kohaku, as far as pattern, apply. Snow white, bright red, clean edges, fins, etc. The only addition then, is the black reticulation robe. It should cover all the red, except for on the head in the Ai type. It should be even on all red. It should not be so heavy as to hide or dim the red. Remember, you have to see that Kohaku there. Koromo can also be seen as having a robe reticulation on top of Sankes and Showas to, but these are normally then shown in Kawari. Fins on Koromo are white.

Now Goshiki also have reticulation on the white as well as the red. We normally only see these with Kohaku patterns. The white areas are very similar to Asagi. Patterns follow the same rules as Kohaku again. Goshiki can be lighter or darker. When they get too dark they look faded. Goshiki were not doing very well in shows, till it was bred back for more Kohaku influence. The Modern Goshiki, only has reticulation on the white and not on the red. This shows a much finer contrast in color and brightens the presentation of the fish. Modern Goshiki are starting to compete with Ai Goromo in this class in Western culture. In Japanese shows, the Goshiki, many times, are separated out from the Koromo.

Good quality Ai Goromo are very hard to find. Many of the spawns have too powerful of a reticulation and it spoils the contrast.

## **KIN GIN RIN**



Gin Rin kohaku



Gin Rin Showa



Gin Rin Ochiba

Take any variety of fish and put shiny scales on top and you have Gin Rin. We have the two names, because the shiny scales appear different colors depending on the back-ground color. If the back-ground color is red, the shiny scales are gold and called Kin. If on white or black, then they appear silver or Gin.

Types of Gin Rin are Pearl, Diamond, Beta and Kado. Pearl Gin is in the center of the scale and gives the look of a round pearl. Diamond Gin is the sunburst type that emanates from the middle like a rising sun. Beta Gin covers almost the whole scale, and Kado Gin covers just the edge. Kado Gin is sometimes confused for Fukurin. You have to look close. Is the sparkle on the edge of the scale for Kado or on the skin that covers the edge of the scale, which is Fukurin.

Pearl is very rare, but is quite stunning. The problem with being rare is to find one with a good pattern. Diamond Gin is the most popular and wins most of the competitions. It seems to be bred the most, and gives the most sparkle. Gin Rin scales for the purest tend to complicate the color and hide the pattern. For this reason, they do not compete well with their non-gin counterparts. This is why there is a separate glass for Judging.



Any fish can be Gin Rin including Doitsu varieties. To be in Gin Rin, however, the Doitsu must have the line of scales on top by the dorsal fin, and then these must all have Gin.

For Judging this class, the most important aspect is the Gin Rin. No matter what type, the Gin must be highly organized on the fish. The Gin should be arranged in rows running the length of the body, parallel to the dorsal. There should be at least 2 and preferably three rows of these scales on each side. The Gin scales should be uniform all the way along this line even up through the shoulder to the shoulder crease and back to the peduncle. The one with the most organized uniform lines of Gin wins. At least as far as Gin. After one looks at the Gin, then the rest of the standards need to be looked at for that type of fish, underneath the Gin. You also have the standards of conformation, color, etc.. The Gin carries a heavy weight in the class and is worth extra points so to speak. So normally the best Gin Rin scales wins, unless there is a very poor representation of the variety underneath it.

## HIKARIMUJI



Gin Matsuba    Orinji Ogon    Platinum Ogon    Yamabuki Ogon    Doitsu

This is a single color Koi that has a Hikari shine. They come in yellow, white, red and orange. They can have a Matsuba pattern on top and then they have Matsuba in their name. Matsuba is considered a pattern and not a color. This confuses people, as it appears then to be a two-colored Koi and people want to put it in the other Hikari varieties. The single color shiny Koi are called Yamabuki Ogon, Platinum Ogon, Hi Ogon or Orenji Ogon, depending on their color. If the yellow has a matsuba it is called a Kin Matsuba. If the platinum has a matsuba pattern, then it is called Gin Matsuba. The Hi Ogon is called a Kin Hi Matsuba. Then all these can have Doitsu forms.

As far as Judging, in this class the Yamabuki Ogons normally dominate. They give a more clear and cleaner shine. The diotsu varieties tend to lessen the shine on the fish and change the gloss, so these do not do well in Judging. If a Matsuba has a very good net it can compete.

The bodies on these fish are very important since there is no pattern. The scalation is very important for the same reason. There must be no scars and that is what is the difficult part about owning a large Ogon.

The Hikari, since this is Hikari class, is very important and the first thing seen when Judging. We look at the overall body shine. Best hints of this, is on the forehead, shoulder

and pectorals. The shoulder should have good shine and the scalation should be even all the way up to the shoulder crease. Sometimes in these Ogons you must watch for white creeping in at this spot around the color. Hikari is very important on the pectorals. Not only on top but underneath. This is the test of the Hikari and can be seen as the fish backs up in the water. Check this next time you buy one.

So body, shine and color are the most important features in this variety. If Matsuba is present, it must add to the presentation of the fish, not dull the Hikari. Good Matsuba is very difficult, so if you want to show, buy the regular Ogons and the light yellow Ogons do the best. Large pectorals on this variety, I think, helps give the impression of power. Ogons should have “Big Hands”. The head has to be clear, with no blemishes, since there is no pattern to cover it up and the shine magnifies the demerit.

This variety is where Fukurin comes from. Here we have that shiny skin between each scale and is very important. No Fukurin, no fish.

Ogons are another fish that like soft water as they grow. They can pop orange or black speckles as they grow in hard water. This is also based on bloodline. Beware of bargains in Ogon for long term fish.

## HIKARIMOYO



Hariwake



Kikusui



Yamatonishiki



Shochikubai



Kujaku



Doitsu Kujaku

These are patterned Hikari fish of more than two colors. Excluded from this variety are Koi of Showa, Utsuri, or Kumomryu lineage. The king here, for Show, is the Kujaku. So if you want to show Hikarimoyo choose Kujaku. I don't select them, I am just the messenger, for you Hariwake fans. Kujaku adds another complexity element to the fish over Hariwake. And remember, in the Koi Show world, the harder the journey the more the reward. You can quote me. Major contributors to this class are Kujaku, Hariwake, Kikusui, Yamatonishiki, Shochikubai (metallic Koromo), and a few others.

Judging in this class still follows all the basic principles, but again, since we are in Hikari, the sheen is very important. As on the Ogons, look to the shoulder, forehead and pectorals for the quality of Hikari. Beware of defects that can mar the shine. The Matsuba of Kujaku, if not good, can dull the fish. Head defects in shape or color around the eyes and nose can make the head look dirty and the fish less elegant. With the varied patterns, vertical and horizontal type patterns, it is important to look for balance. The edge of the color must be crisp. Many varieties, even doitsu in the group, tend to have bleeding of color in the edge. So when you are buying, look for good contrast of color. On the Kujaku, which is a two color Hariwake, with a Matsuba pattern on top, you must make

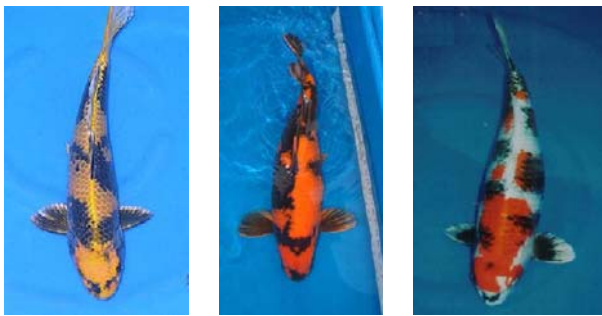


sure the netting is evenly colored and placed. If the matsuba is too dark it will hide the shine as well. On the Kujaku, it is better if two colors are on the head, rather than a single color.

Remember the Judges like to see interesting areas of contrast and many areas where the colors can be seen together. For this reason a more step pattern or intricate pattern would be preferred over a straight continuous one. Color should be the same the whole length of the fish. No blurred spots. Head color should be the same as body color. Fins should be large and bright.

This is a very interesting class for beginners and even the advanced hobbyist appreciates a good Kujaku. I do.

## HIKARI UTSURI



Kin Ki Utsuri   Kin Hi Utsuri   Kin Ki Showa

Hikari Utsuri, includes all the metallic Koi that are of Showa or Utsuri decent. It includes the Kin Showa, Gin Shiro Utsuri, Kin Hi Utsuri, and Kin Ki Utsuri. There are not many real nice Hikari Utsuri out there that come to shows, so any one that is good and clean can compete. No favorites here, although if all are good, the preferred may be the three colored Kin Showa because of the third color complexity.

In Hikari still, so shine is important and checked the same way as other Hikari. With the sheen on the black base Koi, many times the black can be blurred into almost gray, and the reds can appear more orange. This is especially true on the Kin Showa where the Hi is orange. Sometimes we can see Kin Showa with a bright red and they truly can be pretty.

Head is important in this class to show off sheen. Just like in Kujaku these can get black around the eyes and nose, which can be distracting. The heads must have two colors on the Utsuris and three colors on the Kin Showa. Pectoral fins are normally all black or with motoguro. Again the shine is important on the peccs. Since these are all from Utsuri and Showa lineage, you must watch for head defects from inbreeding, Mouth deformities and heads, that are out of proportion, are common. Black tends to scatter on these Koi so look for clean pattern. Good Koi in this class are hard to find.

As a pointer, for someone that wants to show in this class, try to find one of these type with a higher proportion of white in the pattern, The lighter colors tend to show shine the best where as black shows the shine the least. Older specimens in this class tend to get dull with time. So one that has more white will be brighter and maintain the brightness longer. The Show life of Hikari Utsuri is very short. The shine and the color tend to fade early.

## KAWARIGOI



Kumonryu



Beni Kumonryu



Kikokuryu,



Beni Kikokuryu



Hajiro



Benigo



Chagoi



Sorogoi



Matsakawabake



Kage Showa



Konoko Sanke



Ochiba

This class contains all the other Koi that do not fall into any other class. It even contains two Hikari type fish. The Kikokuryu and the Beni Kikokuryu. These, for a time, were in Hikarimoyo, but it was decided to put them in Kawari, due to having Kumonryu lineage, which is in this class. Just to mention a few, this class contains:

Kumonryu, Beni Kumonryu, Kikokuryu, Beni Kikokuryu, Hajiro, Matsakawabake, Aka Matsuba, Kigo, Benigo, Chagoi, Sorogoi, Ochiba Shigure, Kanako Gosanke, Kage Showa, Kage Utsuri, and countless others.

There are too many here to go over all the different perfect specimens for each. Within the class the more complex patterns are preferred over single color, if both are equal quality. The favorites in this category would be Ochiba Shigure, both types of Kumonryu and both types on Kikokuryu. Kanako and Kage can be interesting, but many times they do not hold their patterns for a long time. Their show lives are very short.

Kawarigoi are very popular with amateur hobbyists. There are many interesting oddities, but in the Japanese mind, there is a large difference between oddities and quality. One must be careful in Judging these Koi, that these are not confused. Not many of these are bred, so the competition is not there to drive their popularity in the show circuit. What then is really important in this class, is to have good pattern and body. This can then give these Koi a power element, that can push them higher in the ranks at the Show.

A few of these in your pond can make an interesting collection.

## SELECTING SHOW KOI VERSUS POND KOI

In summary, if looking for Show Koi you must first look for the basic elements of quality, that are the same for any Koi, in any class. Then you must look for the qualities that are the standards of that class. All these factors are important in showing and finishing, high in the rankings. All these, also, are important to know from the standpoint, that it also governs the relative price of the koi. Since Koi are not born with price stickers on their heads, it is important for the consumers to have a relative idea on value. If you would like to show buty are afraid of the higher price tags in Gosanke and large fish, then consider showing in Hikari Classes or Kawarigoi. Also if you show in smaller sizes you can buy males that can still win these sizes. All these thing will help lower the price of the koi.

If just looking for some nice pond fish, for long term interest and enjoyment, I would suggest that you still look for the same qualities in body and color. Where you must make your concessions, will be in pattern and relative skin quality of high priced pieces. Males will be cheaper. Slight body defects can make the fish cheaper. Also when buying for home and long term, consider your pond conditions. If you have soft water, then Kohaku, Goromo, Goshiki and Asagi do well. Most of the others can tolerate hard water.

Happy Koi Hunting,

We hope you find this article useful.