

### Koi Joy – the pleasures of water gardening

For the past few years we have had a very healthy pond, but October changed that for us. One morning I went out to feed the fish and there stood the evil great blue heron. I chased him off and checked for injured or missing fish. It appeared he had not inflicted any damage, except Nippon, my large Showa, was showing signs of redness. I contributed it to stress caused by the Heron. I covered the ponds with netting because I knew the heron would be back each day for a number of days.

The next day Nippon was really red with a large gray spot on his head. I surmised the heron had caused an injury after all. Nippon is quite large so I called a friend, Fred, who is president of the First Coast Koi Club. He has excellent knowledge of Koi, and a technique of catching fish which I haven't been able to master. I needed him to help catch Nippon, treat the wound, and put him in the hospital tank. Fred arrived a short time later and as we were looking over Nippon, we realized most of the fish were behaving strangely. It was not the Heron after all.

This is the Koi keeper's nightmare. How do you know what to do? We determined it wasn't heron damage, so what had changed? The previous week I introduced 4 baby koi to the main pond from the quarantine tank. They were the only fish not showing any signs of illness, so logically they might be the source of the problem.

Without doing a scrapping for study under a microscope you can't accurately determine microbe problems, but I didn't want to stress the pond further by pulling fish. After a discussion with Fred, I treated the pond for parasites and added salt to bring the level to 1PPT. One hour later they were much better.

The next day, all the fish were still eating aggressively. I added more salt to bring the level to 2PPT, but by lunch they had a sudden relapse. I called an out of town friend, Gary Elmore to discuss my actions and see if he had any recommendations. It's nice to have lots of friends with fish knowledge because you can't just run your fish to the vet. He felt that it was a bacterial infection because it affected them so rapidly. I treated with a fungus and bacterial disease treatment and started feeding medicated food.

Today I am one lucky Koi keeper. All fish survived, even Nippon. There were lots of lessons to be learned. But one we learned long ago is if fish start looking or acting differently, act on it right away. Keep treatments on hand. Waiting one or two days to treat the pond could have resulted in dead fish. Never introduce new fish to the pond without treating them in the quarantine tank and it pays to have lots of knowledgeable friends.