

Pond Construction – Contractor Warning Report

10 Questions to ask your Pond Designer

Sublime Water Gardens wants to help you choose a reputable contractor that specializes in water features to prevent frustrations and disasters along the way. So whether you choose us or another contractor please do your research and ask the following questions to get the best water feature for your home.

1. Do you specialize in waterscapes and pond design? Do you have a background in fish husbandry? On average, how many ponds and waterfalls do you build in a year?

In the long run, you will be much happier contracting with a pond designer that understands the husbandry of Koi, goldfish and pond ecology in general. Think about it, who would you rather have build your one of a kind water garden or koi pond? A landscape guy who builds one or two ponds a year or a pond specialist that eats, sleeps, and breathes backyard waterfall, koi pond construction and pond design? **SWG** has 15 years of designing and building water features experience and a lifetime background in the tropical fish industry.

2. Are you a licensed landscape contractor that specializes in pond construction and pond design?

Believe it or not, there is a big difference between installing a pond and a pool. Don't get caught up in thinking a water feature is a water feature.... they are very different. Your pond designers should not only be able to provide you with educational information but also be able to explain the project in detail..

3. Do you charge for design consultations or give FREE estimates?

Free ball park estimates for pond construction can easily be given over the phone, however a good pond design consultant will charge for their time if you ask them to come to your home. In most cases this pond design fee should be rebated back into the contract price for your custom water garden or koi pond construction. Consultation fees typically range from \$125.00 to \$200.00 and consist of an actual site visit, conceptual drawing, and a detailed itemized proposal.

4. Do you have a pond design portfolio, construction testimonials and references?

Do your research! Ask the contractor to show you their portfolio, go on line and look at their website or use other search avenues such as Angies list or Houzz. If you like what you see in pictures ask if you can visit any of the features to get a true look at the workmanship. Search for customer reviews, check out BBB ratings, and look at what kind of online presence they have. Do they partner with any other groups or organizations? Speak with their customers to see if they were happy with the service, on budget, on time or what they could have done better. Remember you will be paying for the service they provide and you want to ensure you will be happy with the final results. **SWG** proudly partners with North Texas Water Garden Society and Out Teach (formerly REAL School Gardens). All photos on the SWG website were built by SWG and references are readily available upon request.

5. In your pond design do you plan to use concrete or a rubber liner?

When constructing waterscapes or koi ponds, any pond construction specialist should use the highest quality 45 mil E.P.D.M. rubber liner. Concrete and preformed tubs for pond construction are a thing of the PAST! Not only does it add cost to your project but it takes much longer to install. It is far from natural looking, difficult to add or reduce the size in later years and with the ever shifting ground of North Texas, much more costly to repair.

6. Should my natural pond ecosystem circulate 24 hours per day?

Plain and simple YES! Many contractors still consider a pond just a modified pool but that is far from the truth. The beneficial bacteria (not to mention your fish) are living organisms in your pond and require constant oxygenation. Without them your pond will become "unhealthy" and unbalanced. Non pond

contractors usually prefer to work with pool equipment, which is not cost effective to run continuously, so they suggest running your pond filters and/or waterfalls part-time to help save you money and electricity. A skilled pond contractor, however, will use high efficiency pumps that are specifically designed for waterscapes and ponds and are economical to run twenty-four hours a day.

7. What is your guarantee on your construction workmanship?

If you contract with an unlicensed landscaper to save money and run into trouble, you may be out of luck and will be looking at spending more just to fix your pond. Your contractor should offer manufacturer warranties on the products they sell AND guarantee the workmanship on construction.

SWG guarantees workmanship for 1 year!

8. Do you have proof of your General Liability Insurance?

Protect yourself against lawsuits. Be sure ANY contractor you are using is properly insured.

Although it varies by state, the State of Texas does not require workers comp insurance so it is best to ask for proof of general liability Insurance or a certificate of Insurance.

9. If I sign a contract for pond construction and have second thoughts, what are my rights?

You always have rights! The buyer in a home solicitation contract has the right to cancel the contract at any time prior to midnight of the third business day following the signing of the contract. **SWG** wants you to be happy with your decision, so as long as construction has not started you can always opt out of the contract.

10. How long will this pond construction project take you to complete?

This answer varies greatly depending on the size and design of the pond and of course mother nature. A typical 8X10 natural pond could take a few as three to four days; however a larger or more modern detailed pond will naturally take longer. Most ponds and water features are outside and therefore work can be delayed by inclement weather which the contractor cannot be held accountable. Construction should resume as quickly as possible once conditions improve however. Make sure you have it all in writing; the cost, payment schedule, scope of work, warranties, and a timeline of the tasks to be performed. Bottom line, an open line of communication between client and contractor is vital!