Koi: History & Care Information

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Koi, or *Nishikigoi*, are the national fish of Japan. The word "*Nishiki*" describes a colorful brocade in Japanese and "koi" means carp. Therefore, *Nishikigoi* can be roughly translated to "colorful brocaded carp." Koi are thought to have originated in the Middle Eastern region now known as Iran from the common carp. Over a thousand years ago, carp were widely traded as a staple food source, exported to Japan, China, and Western Europe.

Koi were first bred in Japan in the 1820's, initially in the town of Ojiya in the Japanese prefecture of Niigata. While they were still being bred for food, these brown fish occasionally produced red and blue mutations. Through selective breeding, the red and white variety - recognizable as the modern ornamental Koi - was eventually perfected in 1870. More than 100 color varieties have been bred from this single species of fish, including a glossy-scaled variety in Germany now known as the "mirror" or "German" carp.

High-Quality Koi

Many Koi are rated by breeders as High Quality. These Koi come from some of the top breeders in Japan, and are bred from the finest bloodlines of show champions. The High-Quality rating is the result of breeders evaluating physical size, physical characteristics, patterns, colors, and overall behavior/presence.

Care & Feeding

The ideal setup for Koi is a pond of at least 1000 gallons with a fine gravel substrate, rocks and hardy plants. Koi like to eat the roots of plants and will dig to get to them, so be sure to anchor and protect plants by placing large rocks around their bases. Also, provide adequate filtration to maintain proper water conditions. Feed Koi a quality pellet or flake food with a protein content that does not exceed 30%.

Life Span

While Koi can live longer than 100 years, their typical life span is 25 to 35 years.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*