

South Hants Grand Champion 2009

On hearing that Stuart Toms' Kohaku was crowned Grand Champion at the South Hants Koi Show, we decided to ask him a few questions about his passion for koi...



When did you first become interested in koi keeping?

Around 20 years ago when I was 15.

Tell us about your pond and garden.

I have a 10,000-gallon Streamflow pond contained in its own fish-house. This featured in *Koi Carp magazine* earlier this year (March 2009 issue).

What do you enjoy most about koi keeping?

Both its challenges and the opportunity to relax and watch them after a hard day at work.

How many koi do you have and what size are they?

There's around 40 fish in the pond up to 90cm.

What is your favourite variety of koi?

Probably Sanke.

Have you ever had any serious problems with koi keeping?

No, touch wood.

What would you say is the most important aspect in koi keeping and why?

The hobby is many things to different people. The one thing that remains constant is keeping the water properly and the fish will generally look after themselves.

Do you have any advice for other koi keepers?

If the hobby starts to bite invest in your pond and its infrastructure before buying any expensive fish.

Tell us about the koi which won Grand Champion at the recent South Hants Show.

The fish is a seven-year-old Kohaku bred by Momotaro Koi Farm. It was actually

originally selected as a Nisai by an English hobbyist who travelled there with Mark Gardner in November 2003.

How long have you had this koi and how has it developed during this time?

I have owned the fish since May 2008. It was 75cm and is now 81-82cm and probably twice the volume.

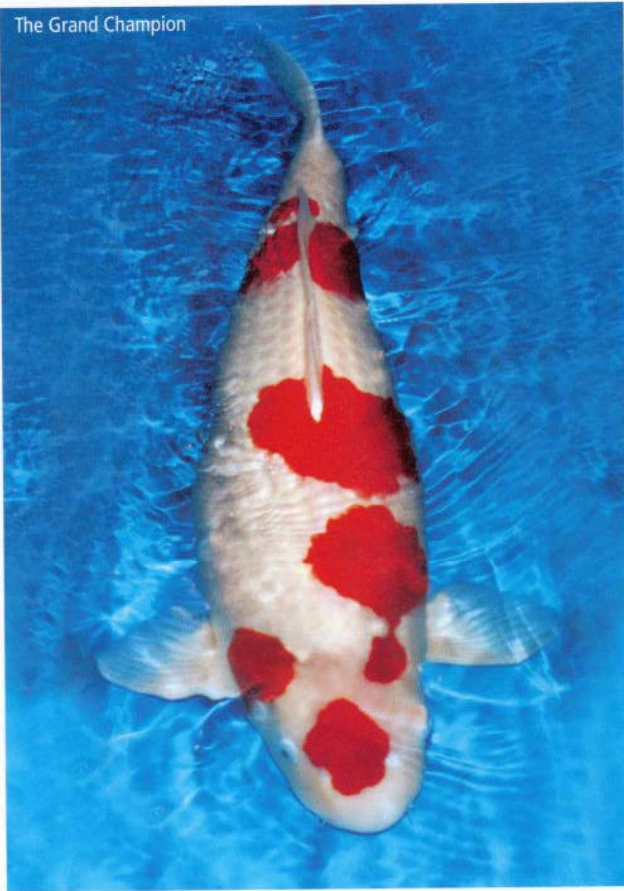
How did it feel when you first discovered this koi had been crowned Grand Champion?

I was very pleased. It is a fish I bought for my wife Sarah whose interest in the hobby waned a little after the pressures of my epic pond build. Peculiarly she suddenly rediscovered some significant interest when she knew it was in the running for the top prize and saw the size of the trophy!

Was it expected?

I had no idea what to expect competition-

The Grand Champion



This is what the koi looked like when Stuart first bought it from Yume Koi



wise this year. I knew that it was likely to be stiff having seen last year's South Hants winner at the South East show. So I was far from certain of our prospects when I bagged her up that morning.

Where did you buy the koi from and has the dealer helped with your progression in the hobby?

I bought the koi from Mike Snaden at Yume Koi. It was a fish that he had imported for another hobbyist and held onto for some time for him while he was between ponds. Unfortunately he never built a new pond so it was sold to help cover outstanding fees. Mike is actually one of the most knowledgeable dealers in the UK and has done much to help me raise my game – and empty my wallet!

Was it a tough competition?

I'd say so, although I must say I was grateful it was too far for John Hellens and Bill Oakley!

How long have you been showing koi?

I've taken a vat at the National for the last few years and also now the South East show.

Have you won major awards in the past?

I suppose the most significant would

have to be Baby Champion at the South East show last year with an English bred Koi-UK Kohaku. Incidentally I took this same fish to the South Hants show as part of my vat with the Grand Champion where it was judged the best fish in Size 3 overall. The other fish I took was a Koi-UK Showa which was second best in Size 4 overall, so by one fish I just missed out

giving the South Hants an English bred Young Champion.

Do you have any advice to offer readers who plan to show their koi?

Make sure you starve them, have appropriate size bags/boxes and your own oxygen cylinder, and go out there and test your eye and fish against others.

