

# Yamazaki Koi Farm

Tim Waddington interviews  
Manabu Yamazaki of Koi Farm



Originally known as Yamasan Koi Farm, Yamazaki is not a 'household' name in the koi world. In fact many hobbyists may not have heard of them, but I would guess that many of you will have Yamazaki koi in your pond – even if you don't know it! The farm produces many koi for the wholesale market and the fish are distributed all over the world.

Yamazaki Koi Farm, as it is known today, was started 67 years ago by Kokichi Yamazaki and his son Seiichi. Situated in Kawaguchi town in Niigata, anybody visiting Japan on a regular basis will know of this farm. They will also know the fantastic character who is Manabu Yamazaki. He now pretty much runs the koi farm and is one of the nicest guys you will ever come across in Japan. Nothing is too much trouble for this guy – he will do anything for you.

## a huge business

Yamazaki Koi Farm have over 80 mud ponds in the Niigata area, all varying in size. They are not known for any 'Jumbo' Tosai or anything like that, they just produce as many good varieties as they can. In fact the farm is now

one of the biggest facilities in the area and it produces many, many koi. Yamazaki Koi Farm now breed with 30 sets of parent koi. Yes... 30 sets! From these sets the farm will keep 2000 koi from each spawning. Do the maths; that's a lot of fish.

So out of the 30 sets of parents we have 60,000 koi. From this 60,000 Yamazaki Koi Farm will keep 4000 as their Tategoi. After one year this number is down to 400 Nisai, and the following year, 70 Sansai. This means that from the original 60,000 koi, only 70 three-year-old koi will be left. It's quite amazing when you really think about it.

These figures just go to show why it is one of the hardest jobs in the world. If they have a bad harvest with the weather and other factors, then the numbers can be much lower. It does however show that these breeders really want to offer the very best koi they can produce. It would be easy to relax the culling process and mass produce average koi but these guys refuse to do that, and that's why they produce so many good koi. They never allow 'rubbish' to get through. This is one of the reasons why the Japanese will always produce the best koi in the world – tradition and pride. ▶

## About the author:



**Tim Waddington** has been involved in the koi industry for around 20 years. Having visited Japan over 30 times, he has an excellent relationship with Niigata breeders and a great insight into what they do, and how they do it. Tim hopes this series of articles will help people understand what goes on over in Japan, and how these koi breeders get the finished product into our ponds.

I would guess that many of you will have Yamazaki koi in your pond – even if you don't know it!



### the wholesale market

The farm mainly deals with wholesalers who buy koi for the rest of the world, so numbers are very important to the farm. Yamazaki koi are on every wholesalers' pricelists because they breed quality. UK, Germany, Holland, Ireland, America, Belgium and many more places will all receive koi from this farm. This goes to show what a good businessman Manabu is.

Some years ago he spent time working for a koi dealer in America – as a result he now speaks very good English! More importantly, he learnt about what people liked to buy, and he learnt about koi markets outside of Japan – something which was vital for how he now runs his business. He saw the opportunity in America to breed 'long fin' koi and now exports thousands of them to America. Not so many anywhere else though... for now! Thank goodness!

Incidentally – and going off track a little – the family also own a mushroom business which is situated on the same property. This is

also a very big concern, producing some of the best shiitake in the area.

### Shinkokai representative

Manabu is one of the six Shinkokai representatives in the Niigata area. This is a huge responsibility for someone who is only 33 years of age. You will always see him at all the major koi shows setting up and doing various admin jobs for the show. I think one day he has a very good chance of bringing in the new blood needed to keep the organisation going.

Along with other breeders such as Yozaimon, Toshiaki Sakai, Hoshikin and the Dainichi brothers, Manabu is a really up and coming breeder. This is fantastic for the continuation of high class koi being produced in Japan.

### 2004 earthquake

During the earthquake of 2004 Yamazaki Koi

This means that from the original 60,000 koi, only 70 three-year-old koi will be left





Farm suffered quite bad structural damage. It was, however, easily repairable. Kawaguchi town came out much better than other areas of the mountains.

They repaired the main koi house but then decided to add another koi house directly across the street. This has really given them the water space they need to grow even bigger in the world market. It has also enabled them to produce some more varieties, and even get to a stage where they can concentrate on specific varieties to become a household name!

They have always produced mainly metallic varieties, but now they also produce some very good Go-Sanke.

I recently had the opportunity to chat with Manabu about the koi farm and business in general...

**Your work load must be very busy?**

Yes, we start harvesting our tosaï in September and finally harvest our parent koi in December. With my father and brother (who usually runs the mushroom farm) we work long hours and manage every year, but are very tired.

**Do you sell koi all year?**

Before we only sold koi in February, March and April but now we produce enough fish to satisfy the wholesale market so we must have stocks all through summer.

**what are your further plans?**

We want to continue supplying the big markets and have our koi for sale in many countries. We will also try and concentrate on producing higher class koi.

**You do a lot of work for Shinkokai.**

**How do you fit this in?**

I believe in the Shinkokai and enjoy very much helping with it. I see it as very important within the industry to have these koi shows and events and show off the best koi in the world. It is what makes Japan very special.

**Now is business?**

It's the same as all the other koi breeders – very slow. The exchange rate from most places is not as good as they were and this has affected us. We just hope it gets better.

**how are you fighting KHV?**

We have our fish tested four times a year now and have always been negative.

If anyone is visiting Japan please go and see Manabu. He has some lovely koi for sale and, I promise, you can't fail to love him! 鯉



**Varieties produced**

- Purachina
- Yamabuki Ogon
- Chagoi
- Ochiba
- Goshiki
- Kiki Kuryu
- Shiro Utsuri
- Harewake
- Hi Utsuri
- Kujaku
- Kohaku
- Sanke
- Showa

They also produce the Gin Rins plus all metallic varieties known!

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