

Mid-Atlantic Koi

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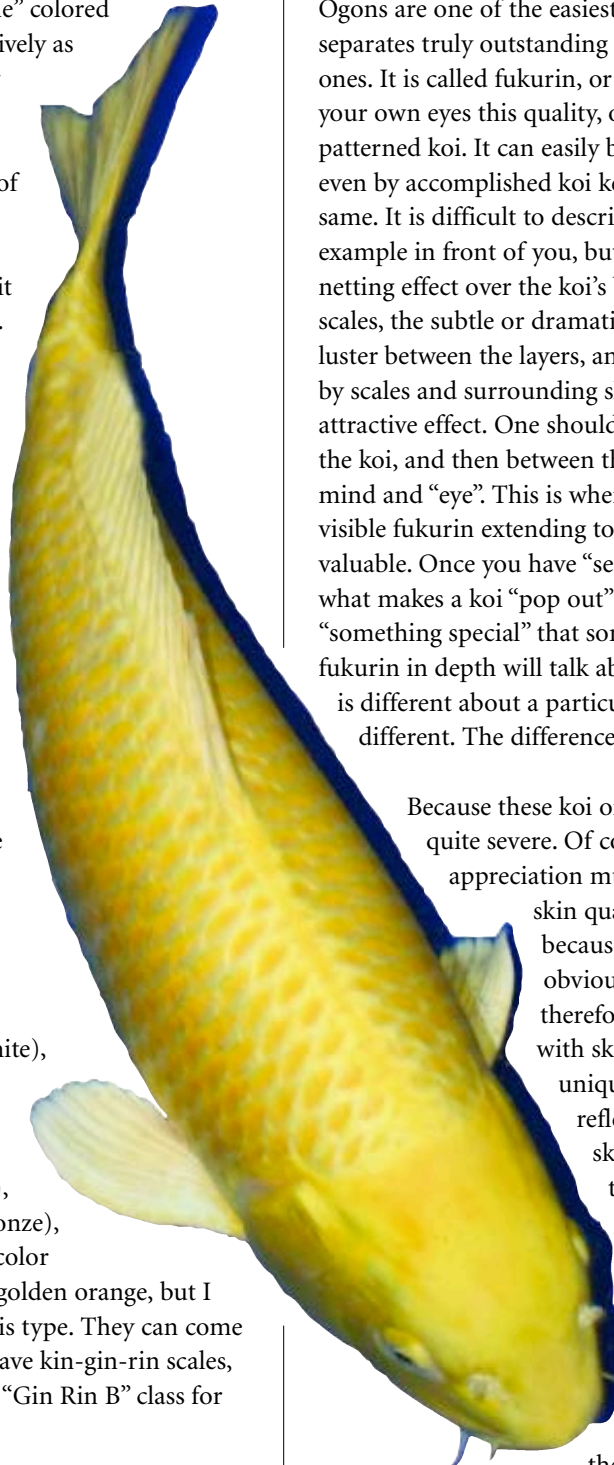
Selecting a
Young
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Selecting a Young Hikari Mono

by Bob Winkler, AKCA Certified Judge
with Credit to Kate McGill, BKKS and ZNA Certified Judge

These are all metallic and “one” colored koi. They are known collectively as “Ogon”. Hikari means shiny or metallic, and mono means one. Ogon means “golden”. You may often hear variations of the name to include “muji”, which also means “one”. It may seem like a “double emphasis” to say Hikari Mujimono, but it is still considered a correct variety name. I guess some people really want you to know that it really is just the one color. :) Then just to confuse us all, koi that have a matsuba (a black netting pattern, with the black at the center of the scale) pattern, but have one “primary” color are also in this group. Koi like Gin (silver) Matsuba Ogon and Kin (gold) Matsuba Ogon are the more common examples of these. The Gin Matsuba has been called the “Leopard Ogon”, because the black centered scales can look to many people like leopard markings. The Kin Matsuba Ogon actually looks to me like it is more an Orange color, and Ray Armstrong in our club has an outstanding example swimming in his pond.

Ogons come in many colors. The most common are Purachina (platinum or white), and Yamabuki (bright yellow or almost gold), but other stable types include the Cream (pale gold), Nezu (grey), Orenji (deep metallic orange), Hi (metallic red), and lesser known ones like Mukashi (bronze), and Kuro (metallic black). The original color was “Saffron”, which is supposed to be a golden orange, but I have never had the privilege of seeing this type. They can come in Doitsu varieties also. They may also have kin-gin-rin scales, but these koi are usually moved into the “Gin Rin B” class for koi shows.



Ogons are one of the easiest koi to see a skin quality that separates truly outstanding koi of all types, and just really good ones. It is called fukurin, or amine. Once you have seen with your own eyes this quality, one can work at picking it out in patterned koi. It can easily be confused with gin rin, or metallic, even by accomplished koi keepers and judges. But it is not the same. It is difficult to describe without an outstanding live example in front of you, but I will try. I am referring to a fine netting effect over the koi’s body. The layering effect of skin and scales, the subtle or dramatic difference in pigmentation and luster between the layers, and the difference in light reflection by scales and surrounding skin, all combine to produce this attractive effect. One should first look at the skin on the back of the koi, and then between the scales to distinguish this in your mind and “eye”. This is where it is most obvious, but Ogon with visible fukurin extending to the belly area are said to be highly valuable. Once you have “seen it” you will not forget it. It is what makes a koi “pop out” in a pond. That indescribable “something special” that someone who has not studied koi and fukurin in depth will talk about. They don’t know what exactly is different about a particular koi, but they know it is different. The difference is fukurin.

Because these koi only have one color, the standard is quite severe. Of course, the basic requirements of koi appreciation must be present. Conformation and skin quality is all there is to judge on, because there is no pattern. They are more obvious if they are “not there” and therefore critical. Conformation interacts with skin quality for metallic koi in a unique way. The higher the luster, or reflective finish, the better quality is the skin. At the same time, the harder is the outline, and more demanding of the basic shape. The flat reflective finish is far more unforgiving in terms of imperfections, than the soft, non-reflective skin of other varieties. The outlines of metallic koi appear harder, very strongly defined. For example, the rounded, trailing edge of the

pectoral fin is almost transparent in many non-metallic varieties, especially younger fish, making a deviation from the perfect line hardly noticeable. A metallic koi, however, has solid looking, highly visible fins right to the tips. Poor quality Ogons unfortunately abound, and are often unfairly marketed as “rare” or “unique”. Early Ogon types such as “Kin or Gin Kabuto”, which have a light colored head and a black “horseshoe” marking, and black body or black edged scales (not matsuba) are ones to watch out for.

Ogons are among the fastest growing, and friendliest koi of all the varieties. This is often credited to their closeness to the original Magoi in breeding. If one wants their koi to hand feed, one common “strategy” is to buy an Ogon as they are usually the most bold. The other koi will often follow the “lead” of the Ogon and be much friendlier.

One of the most famous breeders of Jumbo Yamabuki Ogons in Japan is Izumiya, and for Platinum Ogons, is Choguro, both of the Niigata area. Our “Akachan” (baby) is from Izumiya, and sadly both breeder’s koi houses took major damage in last fall’s earthquake. Hopefully, they will recover and continue, as their koi have a distinctive and powerful presence that would be missed.

When looking for a young Ogon, there are some important factors to concentrate on. Start with the head, as with most koi. It must be very clean, almost “bald”, with no spots or stains, and a highly reflective surface. Older Ogons tend to develop darker areas, and small pits on the head, which are not desirable. I like to see older siblings of any koi, if possible, when selecting koi. Gives one a “glimpse” into the future possibilities of the koi. The scales, and particularly the pectoral fins, must have the brightest possible shine to them. The shape of the pectoral fins is critical, and should appear large and well formed. The scale pattern must be perfect and symmetrical, leading the eye toward the tail. The light netting effect, already described, tends to highlight the neatness of the scaling very attractively.

Hikari Mono, or Ogon, are very popular among novice koi keepers and are one of the first types of koi many of us have bought. The trend is move away from these koi as one’s taste becomes more “refined”. Very serious koi keepers often move “back” to Ogons because of their quiet charm, the generally big size they achieve, and because to have an absolutely flawless example is an achievement in itself. We find that the contrast of a nice Ogon in a pond makes all the koi stand out and now find them an essential part of any complete collection. ❖

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