

# *Mid-Atlantic Koi*

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# Selecting a Young Koromo

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



**2003 Isawa Sakai 67 cm Ai Goromo Sansai**

**K**oromo is a group of koi that many koi keepers value. Personally, I had my first “aha” experience of growing and learning in koi with a Budo Goromo over 10 years ago. This was the first really decent “quality” koi that I owned, and it really served to increase my thirst for learning the differences in what makes a high quality koi and one that is not so good. I “went away” from Koromo for years, in the truly Gosanke “snob” fashion, but my dear wife pointed one out (our “Tigger”) two years ago that we “just had to have”, and I am

happy to say I see the “light” once again. She is right. A good one is truly special.

Koromo are a group of koi ideally patterned similarly to Kohaku, Sanke and Showa, with the additional common feature of a scale reticulation over the red patterns (hi) or, in the case of Goshiki, over red and white, or over white only. The reticulation pattern may be blue or black in color. They are a multi patterned, non-metallic koi. All Koromo have a common Asagi bloodline that is crossed with Kohaku, Sanke, and Showa to produce the specific members of the group.

Koromo means “robed” or “veiled”, and refers to the most common appearance of the “vignette” of these koi. The outer third of the area covering each scale tends to carry the darker color, beginning from the indistinct melding of the colors toward the center of each scale and finishing at the scale edge as a neat dark blue or black line. It is as though a wash of dark paint has been gently drawn across part of each scale area within the hi element, but has not completely covered them. Modern Goshiki often have the scale reticulation only over the white scale areas, and this is much cleaner and sharper looking than conventional Koromo robbing.

Young Ai-Goromo may be indistinguishable from Kohaku, as the blue scale reticulation often does not develop until the koi is several years old. Ai-Goromo are very elegant, having clear white skin and hi markings delicately etched with a blue vignette. A little blue tinted sashi is acceptable, where the scales insert into the skin at the leading edge of each hiban (red area) but the kiwa (red edge) should always be well defined. Thus, the blue color should not “run” from the hi into the white skin following the trailing edge of a pattern element. When this occurs, as it sometimes does for an older Koromo, this koi is said to be going “Goshiki”.

Sumi Goromo are Koromo where the reticulated effect, or robing, over the hi elements is black, rather than blue. Budo Goromo develops with dark purple markings covering small groups of scales, creating shapes like bunches of grapes. These often look like a “black, rather than red” Kohaku. They can be very striking.

When selecting a young Koromo, the Koromo, or robbing, should not be well established, or even well developed. Because

Koromo matures with age, dark robbing will often grow even darker with age to the point where the scalation effect is totally lost. The best Ai-Goromo hi will usually be apricot colored in the youngster and the Koromo will be indicated by very small, very faint bluish markings, usually only seen in the hi markings along the flanks. The hi can be very unstable and susceptible to shrinking and fading, which necessitates close inspection of the kiwa of the hi for stability. In Budo Goromo, the sumi must not be too blotchy or too large. For all Koromo, the white ground must be of the highest quality to offset the ai or budo.

Goshiki are very hard to select young, and I have to admit that I do not have very complete knowledge of how to select these beautiful koi when young. I do know that a good Kohaku pattern is desired, as with all Koromo. The head must be especially clean and light in young Goshiki and it is said the pectoral fins should have a small bit of clean hi in them. No streaking of ai or hi is tolerated. I have also read that selecting them in warm water is best as that is when their ground color is best revealed.

Koromo have been a bit undervalued in the past, but good examples can reveal to you the possibilities they can achieve. A very nice koi to have in any pond. ❖



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