

# *Mid-Atlantic Koi*

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# Selecting Kohaku

# Selecting a Kohaku

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When looking at a large batch of kohaku, perhaps hundreds at a time, the first thing to look for is a white tip at the front and back of the fish. It is very important to have the red on the head of a Kohaku only go down about as far as the nostrils. Do not choose a Kohaku that has red all the way down to the mouth. The head must have red on it. Do not choose a Kohaku with an all white head. Kuchibeni (red on the lips) is allowed if the spot is small and the rest of the red on the head only comes down to the forehead. Red over the eyes of the koi used to be a demerit, but in recent years the red is allowed to cover one eye but never both eyes.

The head is generally one of the most important parts in a young koi. Once you have found several koi with acceptable head patterns, look at the rest of the body. As I mentioned earlier, look to see if there is a white patch right before the tail. It is preferable to have this white area by the tail, but if the rest of the koi has positive characteristics, this is not as important as the head.

On the body, look for red that is balanced side to side and covers about 70 to 80% of the body. This is so that as the koi grows, and the white spreads faster than the red, there is still adequate red on the body. It is preferable to have the red on the body be either in a zigzag pattern (inazuma), or a 3 or 4 step pattern having white creeping up the sides in several areas. These are signs that the red will break up to form steps. If the red is in a straight pattern with no signs of breaking, the pattern will look boring as the koi grows.

Look for a koi that has broad shoulders and relatively large pectoral fins. This generally indicates a koi that will grow large and compete well in shows.

When buying young Kohaku, do not worry too much about the color. The white should preferably be snow white, but may be pink if it was fed color-enhancing food before shipping. Avoid koi with a dirty grayish-white. The red may be bright red or orange-red. Many kohakus that are orange-red when young will turn a beautiful red as they grow.

Next, make sure there are no black or red spots on any of the fins. Red on the pectoral fins, which is tucked in very close to the body, is okay. Also, make sure there are no black marks on the body. All red areas on the body should be in sizeable patches, not in single scale areas (i.e. small red spots). The Kohaku should have white eyes, not blue.

Last but not least, put the koi in a show tub and check for any body defects and any signs of disease. If these exist, do not buy the koi no matter how nice it looks. ❖



Photo compliments of Nishikigoi of Niigata

