

Mid-Atlantic Koi

The Magazine of The Mid-Atlantic Koi Club

July 2004



Is a Sanke in Your Future - Learn How to Select One

Selecting a Sanke

by Dr. Art Lembke, Maryland

AKCA and ZNA Certified Judge & Member of the AKCA Judging Committee

Selecting a good Sanke, when the fish are 4 to 8 inches in length, is very similar to selecting a good Kohaku.

The head of the Sanke, as in all varieties of koi, is one of the most important things to observe. The head should have the same characteristics as that of a Kohaku. There must be red on the head and it should go down close to the nostrils. The nose should be white. If there is Kuchibeni (red lips) present, the red should stop further up on the head than at the nostrils. One eye may be covered with red as long as the red is not

overpowering. Never have red on both eyes. There should not be any black on the head.

Next, look for an interesting pattern on red all the way down the body. Do not choose a koi with red only on the front half or the back half of the body. Balance of color is important.

If you followed the steps above, you will notice you now have a good Kohaku. Now we must add the black. It is best to have the first black patch on the shoulder (not on the head). If there is no black until further back on the fish, the head looks too



elongated. The rest of the black— further back on the body— should be in a nice pattern that is balanced side to side, and preferably in the white areas rather than on the red. Some black on the red areas is all right but the more black in the white areas the better. Modern Sanke are basically Kohaku with about 6 small black patches in the white field. Red should cover about 70% of the koi, black about 10%, and the rest should be white.

At an early stage, look for a fish with a lot of interesting red and very little black. Black tends to come out later and if you start with too much black, it may be too powerful later.

The red may be bright red or orange-red because the red will usually improve with age. The white should be snow white or a slightly pinkish white. Black develops later, so pick a koi with only a little black that is balanced now. Avoid a Sanke that has a lot of small peppery black spots. The black patches should be distinct and cover several scales each. Pepper-like spots are a sign of poor quality.

The fins on a Sanke should be all white or white with a few black stripes. There should not be any red in the fins. Be



careful choosing a young Sanke with many black stripes in the pectoral fins. These sometimes develop too much black at a later stage.

Again, as in all koi, look for broad shoulders and large pectoral fins for good growth potential. Make sure there are no defects or signs of disease on the fish.



Photos compliments of Koi by Keirin.

