

Selecting a Showa

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Selecting a good Showa is one of the toughest young koi to choose. Showa change very much as they grow. They can also take a long time to develop, many times 5 or more years to finish. Many times the black is very deep and only comes out as the fish grows. For this reason, when you see gray areas in the white, it may be deep black that will appear later rather than poor quality white.

Start selecting a young Showa, as with other young koi, by looking at the head. The head should have all three colors: red, black, and white, preferably in equal amounts. Best would be to have a good Kohaku head with a lightning stripe or a Y-shape in black on the top of the head. Kuchi sumi or Nose sumi is a sign of good black to come. Many Showa do not develop this until later, so try to pick a koi with good red and white with some black coming out.

Next, look for a good Kohaku pattern on the body. It should be balanced all through the body. Then check to see if black is present or coming up all over the body. Black, on Showa, tends to finish from the back forward. So if there is some good black in the back and hints of black on the front, this may be a good Showa to try. Also look for black starting, below the lateral line. This tends to develop stronger and spread to the top. Black that originates from underneath, I feel, is more stable than black that does not wrap the body. Do not worry if the black looks to be poor quality at an early age. Black develops later in most good quality showa. It is also okay to have orange-red at a young age because the red improves as the fish grows.

The next important thing to check is the pectoral fins. Ideally, the inner 1/3rd of the fins (close to the body) should be black. As the pectoral fin grows the black seems to remain the same and the surrounding white area seems to enlarge. If the pectoral fins are all black in a young koi it may be all right, because this too can grow to have acceptable Showa fins. If the Showa is already three years old and had not receded yet this may be a problem. Also in older Showa, avoid brush sumi pectorals, which have striping out to the tips. All other fins should preferably be white, but some black is acceptable, especially at the base. No red should be in any of the fins.

Look for a good strong body, large pectoral fins, and a disease free fish. One must know how to choose a good Kohaku and a good Shiro Utsuri to be able to choose a good Showa. If you

take all the black away from a Showa you should have a good Kohaku and if you take all the red away you should have a good Shiro Utsuri.



Another factor to consider in Showa is the percentage of the 3 colors in the total fish. A classic Showa is 40% black, 40% red, and 20% white. A modern Showa has equal amounts of all 3 colors.

As you can see, Showa are one of the most difficult koi to select at a young age, because they change so much as they grow. It is this complexity that makes this one of my favorite varieties of koi. ❖

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