

KOI VARIETIES

(Taken from www.koiandponds.com)

KOHAKU

General Description

'**Kohaku**' is the term applied to a koi that has a **white body** with **red markings**. Kohaku is the first koi breed to be established by the Japanese, with breed stability being achieved in the 1890's.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The **shiro** (white) base color of the body must be unblemished, thick, snowy, and even milky. The shiro must not exhibit any yellowish tint.

The **hi** (red) markings on the white body must be solid, deep, and evenly-colored throughout the entire body. The edges of these markings (also known as the '**kiwa**') must be very defined, or as they say, 'sharp as a razor.' The hi color may vary from koi to koi, but it should be of uniform hue within an individual koi. Different koi exhibit different hues, from a deep persimmon orange to dark, purplish red. This entire range is acceptable, although judges invariably have their own preferences.

Pattern

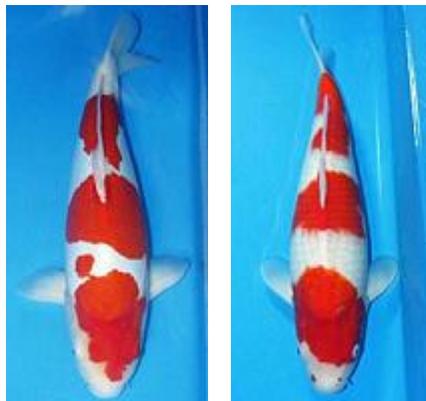
The red markings on the body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that they must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. An equal distribution of shiro and hi is preferred, so in general a koi heavily marked with red or predominantly white in color is not desired. Red spots below the lateral line are not desired, and so are red marks that extend into the tail or the dorsal fin.

The pattern may be continuous or 'stepped', but the over-all effect of white and red balancing each other should be the ultimate consideration. Many people prefer stepped koi and understandably so, since this pattern ensures red and white alternating with each other. Nonetheless, there have been single-stepped (also known as '**ohmoyo**') koi that have won championships for their 'total package' elegance.

A white area separating the tail and the red marking nearest the tail is known as a tail stop, and is considered desirable. A red mark on the lips of a koi (also known as '**kuchibeni**') is a 'plus' if it enhances the over-all package of the koi.

A good kohaku has a pattern on the head. The head pattern must extend slightly beyond the eyes but should not reach the nose or lips, leaving a white area in the front end of the head. A fully red head (referred to as '**menkaburi**') that makes the koi look 'hooded' is considered negative. Nonetheless, some koi look good despite having it, so don't let it prevent you from buying a koi that you like.

A round patch of red on the head is considered nice. If this red patch is the only marking on a white koi, then the koi is called a '**tancho kohaku**', a highly-prized koi variety among the Japanese since it looks like their national bird. If there are other markings on the body of the koi, then the round head patch makes it a '**maruten**' kohaku.



Kohaku

TAISHO SANSHOKU (SANKE)

General Description

'**Taisho Sanshoku**', or '**sanke**' is the term applied to a koi that has a **white body** with **red** and **black markings**. The black markings are in the form of spots that are generally confined to the body above the lateral line. Sanke as a koi breed was established around 1917.

Appreciation Criteria

The criteria for appreciating or judging a Sanke is the same as those of a **Kohaku**, with the addition of criteria for its black markings. In fact, it is said that a good Sanke is actually a good Kohaku that has been further enhanced by black spots that add elegance to the totality of the koi.

Color

The **shiro** (white) base color of the body must be unblemished, thick, snowy, and even milky. The shiro must not exhibit any yellowish tint.

The **hi** (red) markings on the white body must be solid, deep, and evenly-colored throughout the entire body. The edges of these markings (also known as the '**kiwa**') must be very defined, or as they say, 'sharp as a razor.'

The hi color may vary from koi to koi, but it should be of uniform hue within an individual koi. Different koi exhibit different hues, from a deep persimmon orange to dark, purplish red. This entire range is acceptable, although judges invariably have their own preferences.

The **sumi** (black) markings of a Sanke must be deep, solid, and shiny lacquer-black. The shape of every sumi spot must be clearly defined, with its kiwa or edges as sharp as possible. Undeveloped sumi (also known as '**sashi**') may appear mottled dark blue or gray instead of solid black. This is not bad for a young koi, since sumi actually develops as the koi grows older. In fact, spotting a potential champion at a young age involves good anticipation of how well the sumi will develop in the next few years.

Pattern

The red and black markings on the white body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that a certain color must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only.

The red-over-white pattern may be continuous or 'stepped', but the over-all effect of white and red balancing each other should be the ultimate consideration. Many people prefer stepped koi and understandably so, since this pattern ensures red and white alternating with each other. Sanke with a 'hi' pattern that runs continuously from head to tail is known as '**aka sanke**'. Aka sanke is less desired, since the predominantly red body makes it look heavy.

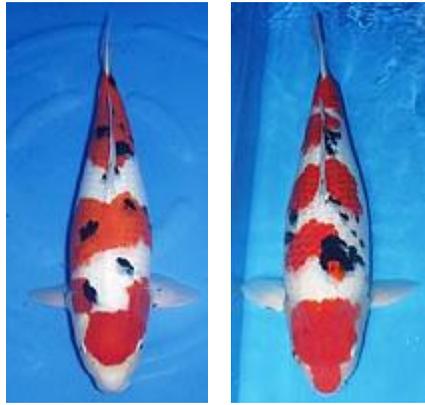
A white area separating the tail and the red marking nearest the tail is known as a tail stop, and is considered desirable. A red mark on the lips of a koi (also known as '**kuchibeni**') is a 'plus' if it enhances the over-all package of the koi.

A good sanke has a red pattern (but absolutely no black color) on the head. The head pattern must extend slightly beyond the eyes but should not reach the nose or lips, leaving a white area in the front end of the head. A fully red head (referred to as '**menkaburi**') that makes the koi look 'hooded' is considered negative. Nonetheless, some koi look good despite having it, so don't let it prevent you from buying a koi that you like.

A round patch of red on the head is considered nice. If this red patch is the only red marking on the sanke, then the koi is called a '**tancho sanke**', a highly-prized koi variety among the Japanese since it looks like their national bird. If there are other red markings on the body of the koi, then the round head patch makes it a '**maruten**' sanke.

The sumi of a sanke must be distributed in the koi body such that they collectively add balance to the koi. Their presence should enhance the 'kohaku pattern' and not degrade it. Old-style sanke koi are heavily endowed with sumi. Modern sanke exhibit a sparser distribution of sumi, but these should be clearly defined and solid black nonetheless. Koi experts

also prefer sumi spots that are positioned over the white body. Conversely, sumi spots over hi markings are less desirable to them.



Sanke

SHOWA SANSHOKU (SHOWA)

General Description

'**Showa Sanshoku**', or '**showa**' is the term applied to a koi that has a **black body** with **red** and **white markings**. This definition is confusing to beginners, since modern showa clearly shows that it also has a white body with red and black markings, just like a [sanke](#). This definition came from the early history of showa. When this breed emerged and was established, it was predominantly black. At that time, most breeders keep this breed for its 'blackness.' Nowadays, hobbyists prefer a more balanced mix of red, white, and black.

The difference between a sanke and a showa is in the appearance of the sumi markings. Sanke sumi tend to be in the form of spots generally confined to the body above the lateral line, while showa sumi appear to be relatively larger streaks that 'wrap' around the body (going below the lateral line) as well as extend into the head.

Showa as a koi breed was established around 1920, during the Showa Emperor Era.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The **shiro** (white) base color of the body must be unblemished, thick, snowy, and even milky. The shiro must not exhibit any yellowish tint.

The **hi** (red) markings on the white body must be solid, deep, and evenly-colored throughout the entire body. The edges of these markings (also known as the '**kiwa**') must be very defined, or as they say, 'sharp as a razor.'

The hi color may vary from koi to koi, but it should be of uniform hue within an individual koi. Different koi exhibit different hues, from a deep persimmon orange to dark, purplish red. This entire range is acceptable, although judges invariably have their own preferences.

The **sumi** (black) markings of a Showa must be deep, solid, and shiny lacquer-black. The shape of every sumi marking must be clearly defined, with its kiwa or edges as sharp as possible. Undeveloped sumi may appear mottled dark blue or gray instead of solid black. This is not bad for a young koi, since sumi actually develops as the koi grows older. In fact, spotting a potential champion at a young age involves good anticipation of how well the sumi will develop in the next few years.

Pattern

The red and black markings on the white body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that a certain color must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. A good example of excellent showa pattern is if the black, red, and white colors are interspersed in a 'checkerboard' pattern.

The red-over-white pattern may be continuous or 'stepped', but the over-all effect of white and red balancing each other should be the ultimate consideration. Many people prefer stepped koi and understandably so, since this pattern ensures red and white alternating with each other. Showa with a large percentage of its body covered by 'hi' with very little shiro is known as '**hi showa**'. Hi showa is less desired, since the predominantly red body makes it look heavy.

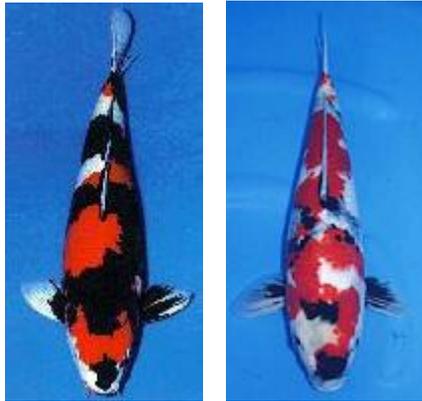
A white area separating the tail and the red marking nearest the tail is known as a tail stop, and is considered desirable. A red mark on the lips of a koi (also known as '**kuchibeni**') is a 'plus' if it enhances the over-all package of the koi.

A good showa must have all three colors on its head. Lightning-shaped sumi that streaks across the head and divides it into two is desirable. This sumi head marking is known as a '**menware**.' A V-shaped sumi pattern on the shoulder of a showa is also desired. It used to be that judges look for both a menware and this V-shaped shoulder sumi in a showa, but nowadays the presence of only one of these is acceptable.

If a round red patch on the head is the only red marking on the showa, then the koi is called a '**tancho showa**', a highly-prized koi variety among the Japanese since it looks like their national bird. If there are other red markings on the body of the koi, then the round head patch makes it a '**maruten**' showa.

The sumi of a showa must be distributed in the koi body such that they collectively add balance to the koi. Their presence should enhance the 'kohaku pattern' and not degrade it. Old-style showa koi are heavily endowed with sumi. Modern showa (also known as '**kindai showa**') exhibit a sparser distribution of sumi, but these should be clearly defined and solid black nonetheless.

The base of the pectoral fins of a showa must be black. This black base area of pectoral fins is known as '**motoguro**.' The more defined and confined to the base it is, the better.



Old-style Showa (left) and Kindai Showa (right)

UTSURI

General Description

'Utsuri' is the term applied to a koi that has a single base color of white (shiro utsuri), or red (hi utsuri), or yellow (ki utsuri). Over this base color are black markings that 'wrap' around the body (going below the lateral line) as well as extend into the head. Utsuri is to showa as bekko is to sanke. Thus, all criteria that apply to showa sumi quality and pattern are applicable to utsuri sumi. Utsuri was established around 1925.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The base color (whether shiro, hi, or ki) of the body must be unblemished, thick, rich, and of uniform hue and quality. The base color must not exhibit any sign of tint of a different color.

The **sumi** (black) markings of an utsuri must be deep, solid, and shiny lacquer-black. The shape of every sumi marking must be clearly defined, with its kiwa or edges as sharp as possible. Undeveloped sumi may appear mottled dark blue or gray instead of solid black. This is not bad for a young koi, since sumi actually develops as the koi grows older. In fact, spotting a potential champion at a young age involves good anticipation of how well the sumi will develop in the next few years.

Pattern

The base color and black markings must be artistically **balanced**. This means that a certain color must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. A good example of excellent utsuri pattern is if the black and base colors are interspersed in a 'checkerboard' pattern.

A good utsuri must have both colors on its head. Lightning-shaped sumi that streaks across the head and divides it into two is desirable. This sumi head marking is known as a '**menware**.' A V-shaped sumi pattern on the shoulder of an utsuri is also desired. It used to be that judges look for both a menware and this V-shaped shoulder sumi in an utsuri, but nowadays the presence of only one of these is acceptable.

The base of the pectoral fins of an utsuri must be black. This black base area of pectoral fins is known as '**motoguro**.' The more defined and confined to the base it is, the better.



Shiro Utsuri (left), Ki Utsuri (center), Hi Utsuri (right)

BEKKO

General Description

'**Bekko**' is the term applied to a koi that has a single base color of white (shiro bekko), or red (aka bekko), or yellow (ki bekko). Over this base color are black markings in the form of spots generally confined to the body above the lateral line.

Bekko is to sanke as utsuri is to showa. Thus, all criteria that apply to sanke sumi quality and pattern are applicable to bekko sumi.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The base color (whether shiro, aka, or ki) of the body must be unblemished, thick, rich, and of uniform hue and quality. The base color must not exhibit any sign of tint of a different color.

The **sumi** (black) markings of a bekko must be deep, solid, and shiny lacquer-black. The shape of every sumi spot must be clearly defined, with its kiwa or edges as sharp as possible. Undeveloped sumi (also known as '**sashi**') may appear mottled dark blue or gray instead of solid black. This is not bad for a young koi, since sumi actually develops as the koi grows older.

Pattern

The base color and black markings of a bekko must be artistically **balanced**. This means that a certain color must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only.

The sumi of a bekko must be distributed in the koi body such that they collectively add balance to the koi. Old-style bekko koi are heavily endowed with sumi. Modern bekko koi exhibit a sparser distribution of sumi, but these should be clearly defined and solid black nonetheless.

An important consideration in choosing a bekko is the cleanliness of its head. Its head should be unblemished by any sumi or shimi (small black spots), and should be as white and pristine as possible.



Shiro Bekko

ASAGI

General Description

'Asagi' is the term applied to a fully reticulated koi that exhibits a blue color above its lateral line, and accented by red markings on its underside. Reticulation refers to scales that form a net-like appearance. Thus, an asagi exhibits a bluish net pattern all over the top portion of its body. This reticulation is created by the asagi's blue scales which are surrounded by white edges.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

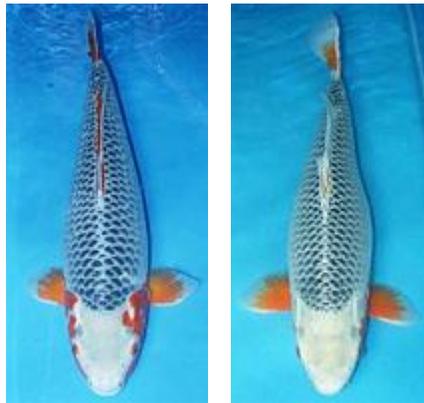
The Asagi's body must be blue in color above the lateral line. The blue color must be of even shade and hue within a single koi, although it may vary from one koi to another. Depending on the bloodline of the koi, the blue color may be dark (almost blue-gray) or light (very light blue) in appearance. Many hobbyists prefer the lighter shade of blue.

Aside from the blue color of the asagi above its lateral line, it must have red coloration on the underside of its body, just below the lateral line. This red color may also appear on all fins, the gill covers, and mouth.

Pattern

The most important aspect of judging asagi koi is the quality of the reticulation over its blue body. The reticulation effect comes from the lighter color of the edge of each blue scale. If the scales are lined up in straight rows, they exhibit a perfect netting effect that looks very beautiful. Asagi koi with perfect reticulation are therefore desirable, while those with uneven or interrupted reticulation are held in much lower esteem.

The red colorations of an asagi must provide a balanced accent to the total package of the koi. A clean and unblemished head is also a sought-after trait of an asagi.



Asagi

KOROMO

General Description

'**Koromo**', which translates to 'robed', is the term applied to a koi that has a white base color, overlaid by red patterns with reticulation. Reticulation refers to scales that form a net-like appearance. In the case of Koromo, these net-like patterns are created by the blue edges of the scales over the red markings. Koromo is basically a cross between Kohaku and Asagi.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The **shiro** (white) base color of the body must be unblemished, thick, snowy, and even milky. The shiro must not exhibit any yellowish tint.

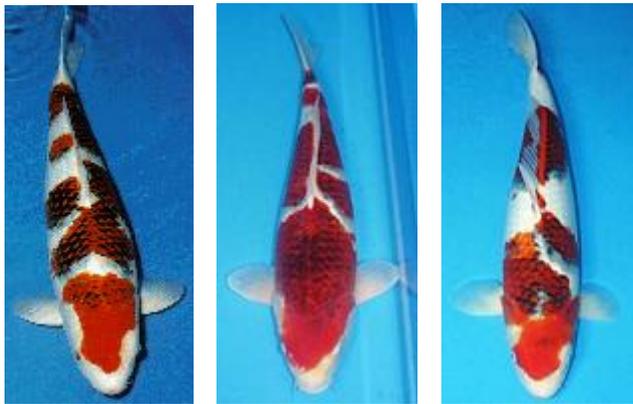
The **hi** (red) markings on the white body must be solid, deep, and evenly-colored throughout the entire body. The edges of these markings (also known as the '**kiwa**') must be very defined, or as they say, 'sharp as a razor.' The hi color may vary from koi to koi, but it should be of uniform hue within an individual koi.

Pattern

The red markings on the body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that they must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. An equal distribution of shiro and hi is preferred, so in general a koi heavily marked with red or predominantly white in color is not desired.

The reticulation effect on the red markings comes from the dark blue color of the edge of each red scale. If the scales are lined up in straight rows, they exhibit a perfect netting effect that looks very beautiful. Koromo koi with perfect reticulation on the red markings are therefore desirable.

A clean and unblemished head is also a sought-after trait of a koromo.



Koromo

GOSHIKI

General Description

'Goshiki' is the term applied to a koi that has a white base color with black-and-blue reticulation, overlaid by Kohaku-like red patterns. Reticulation refers to scales that form a net-like appearance.

The word 'goshiki' translates to 'five colors.' The original goshiki was developed from the sanke and asagi. Thus, the 'five colors' of the goshiki are the red, black, and white of the sanke and the gray and blue of the asagi.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The **shiro** (white) base color of the body must be unblemished, thick, snowy, and even milky underneath the black-and-blue reticulation of the scales.

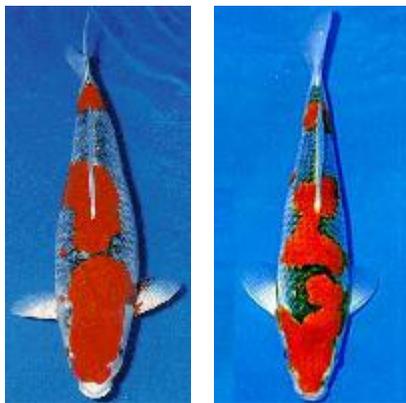
The **hi** (red) markings on the white body must be solid, deep, and evenly-colored throughout the entire body. The edges of these markings (also known as the '**kiwa**') must be very defined, or as they say, 'sharp as a razor.' The hi color may vary from koi to koi, but it should be of uniform hue within an individual koi. The red markings must not be blemished by any black spots.

Pattern

The red markings on the body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that they must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only.

The reticulation effect on the white base color of the goshiki must exhibit a perfect netting effect that is visibly sharp and nicely distributed. Goshiki koi with perfect reticulation on snow-white body are very desirable.

A clean and unblemished head is also a sought-after trait of a goshiki.



Goshiki

KUJAKU

General Description

'Kujaku' is the term applied to a metallic koi with full reticulation or 'netting' effect on its back. The term 'kujaku' translates to 'peacock.' According to www.koi.com, It was developed by Mr. Nishi Hirasawa of Hiranishi Fish Farms in the early 1960's by crossing the Goshiki with the Hikarimuji.

The Kujaku has a metallic white base color overlaid by metallic red, orange, or yellow markings, creating a striking effect. Note that in a Kujaku, both the base color and the markings are reticulated. Reticulation refers to scales that form a net-like appearance. Thus, a kujaku exhibits this net pattern all over its body, unlike Koromo (which has reticulation only on its markings) or Goshiki (which has reticulation only in its base color).

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The most important aspect of appreciating a Kujaku is the sheen and luster of its metallic skin. The skin must be shiny, allowing the koi to stand out on the surface of the water. The overlay pattern of the Kujaku is referred to as its Beni, which means 'red.' However, this overlay pattern or 'beni' doesn't have to be 'red' in a kujaku - it may also be of color gold, yellow, or orange. The beni of a Kujaku must be sharp, deep, and of uniform intensity, but must let the net pattern show through clearly from underneath.

Pattern

The reticulation on the back of a Kujaku koi must exhibit a perfect 'net' effect. The net pattern must be visibly sharp and evenly aligned, with minimal interruptions or blurry areas.

The overlay pattern of the Kujaku must be artistically balanced. This means that they must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. The edges of the markings must be sharp. The head of a Kujaku must not look crowded, and is in fact preferred to be clean and unblemished. The fins of a Kujaku must likewise be clean.



Kujaku

SHUSUI

General Description

'Shusui' is the term applied to the [doitsu](#) version of [Asagi](#). The term 'shusui' translates to 'autumn water.'

Just like an asagi, the top half of the body of a shusui is also light bluish in color, while its undersides exhibit red or orange markings. Being a doitsu though, the shusui can not exhibit a netting effect like an asagi, since it has no scales to show reticulation. Instead, an important feature of a shusui is its line of mirror scales running along its spine from the back of the head to its tail.

'Hi Shusui' refers to a shusui koi whose blue body is almost completely covered with red coloration. A hi shusui that exhibits blue mirror scales on both lateral lines is known as 'hana shusui.'

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The Shusui's body must be blue in color above the lateral line. The blue color must be of even shade and hue within a single koi, although it may vary from one koi to another.

Aside from the blue color of the shusui above its lateral line, it must have red coloration on the underside of its body, just below the lateral line. This red color may also appear on all fins, the gill covers, and mouth.

Pattern

The mirror scales of a shusui along its back must be in a straight row with no gaps in between from the back of the head to its tail. The head of a shusui must be clean, i.e., it must not exhibit any imperfections or small black spots.



Shusui

TANCHO

General Description

'**Tancho**' is the term applied to a Kohaku, Sanke, or Showa whose only red marking is a round patch of red on the head. Tancho koi are highly-prized among hobbyists, especially the Japanese, because they resemble Japan's flag and national bird. No other red marking must appear anywhere else. The red patch must be as round as possible, and should not reach the shoulder nor the nose of the fish.

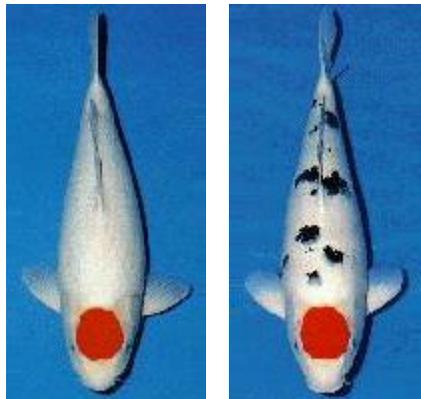
Appreciation Criteria

Color

All color criteria applicable to non-Tancho Kohaku, Sanke, or Showa are applicable to the Tancho type.

Pattern

All pattern criteria applicable to non-Tancho Kohaku, Sanke, or Showa are applicable to the Tancho type with the addition of one rule: no other red marking must appear on the koi except for the round patch on the Tancho's head. The head patch must be as round as possible. It must also be centered between the eyes, and must not extend to the nose or to the shoulder of the koi.



Tancho Kohaku (left) and Tancho Sanke (right)

DOITSU

General Description

'Doitsu' is the term applied to a koi that either: 1) has no scales at all; or 2) has scales only along the dorsal fin and maybe along the lateral line as well. Doitsu came about from the cross-breeding of Japanese koi with the German 'leather' carp, which doesn't have scales. As such, almost all koi breeds have their own 'doitsu' version.

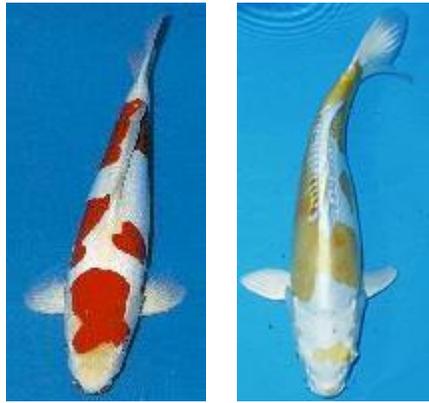
Appreciation Criteria

Color

All color criteria pertaining to a non-doitsu (scaled) breed are applicable to the doitsu version.

Pattern

All pattern criteria pertaining to a non-doitsu (scaled) breed are applicable to the doitsu version.



Doitsu Kohaku (left) and Doitsu Hariwake (right)

HIKARI MUJIMONO

General Description

'**Hikari Mujimono**', or simply '**Hikarimuji**', is the term applied to a metallic koi of single color. The term 'hikari' translates to 'metallic.' Examples of hikarimuji koi are the platinum ogon or purachina, the yamabuki ogon (light yellow), and the orenji ogon (orange).

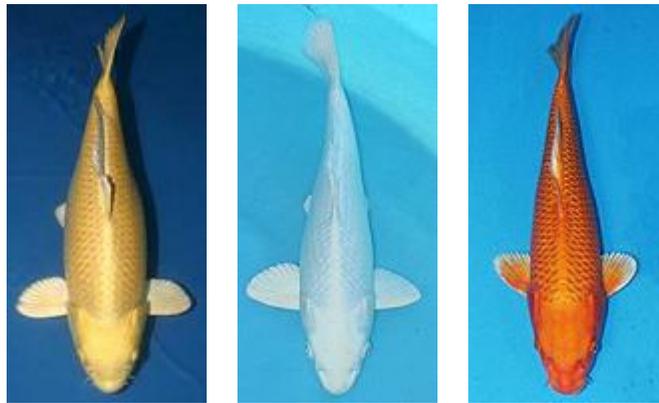
Appreciation Criteria

Color

The color of a hikarimuji must be unblemished, uniform, dense, and shiny. Luster of the skin is an important consideration for this koi type.

Pattern

In the absence of patterns on a hikarimuji koi, one simply has to ensure that the head is very clear, i.e., unblemished by black spots and other imperfections. The body, on the other hand, must be of uniform color and also unblemished. As mentioned earlier, luster of the scales and fins (especially the pectoral fins) is important.



Hikarimuji: Yamabuki Ogon (left), Purachina (center), Orenji Ogon (right)

HIKARI UTSURI

General Description

'**Hikari Utsuri**' is the term applied to the metallic version of the [Showa](#) and [Utsuri](#). The term 'hikari' translates to 'metallic.' This koi class includes the Kin Showa (metallic Showa with a golden shine), the Gin Showa (metallic Showa with a silver shine), the Gin Shiro (metallic Shiro Utsuri), the Kin Ki Utsuri (metallic Ki Utsuri), and the Kin Hi Utsuri (metallic Hi Utsuri).

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The color of a hikari utsuri koi must be unblemished, uniform, dense, and shiny. Luster of the skin is an important consideration for this koi type.

Pattern

The pattern criteria for Showa and Utsuri are applicable to Hikari Utsuri. In addition, luster of the skin and fins (especially the pectoral fins) is important.



Hikari Utsuri: Kin Showa (left, center); Kin Ki Utsuri (right)

HIKARI MOYO

General Description

'**Hikari Moyo**' is the term applied to a metallic koi with more than one color, with the exception of metallic showa and metallic utsuri (both of which are classified as [Hikari Utsuri](#)). The term 'hikari' translates to 'metallic.' The hikari moyo koi class includes the Platinum Kohaku, the Kikusui (platinum Kohaku with wavy red lines on both sides), the Yamabuki Hariwake (platinum koi overlaid by light yellow markings), the Orenji Hariwake (platinum koi overlaid by orange markings), the Gin Bekko (metallic Bekko), and the Yamato Nishiki (metallic sanke).

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The color of a hikari moyo koi must be unblemished, uniform, dense, and shiny. Luster of the skin is an important consideration for this koi type.

Pattern

The pattern criteria for the non-metallic equivalent of a hikari moyo are applicable to this koi type. In addition, luster of the skin and fins (especially the pectoral fins) is important.



Hikari Moyo: Kikusui (left) and Orenji Hariwake (right)

KIN GIN RIN

General Description

'Kin Gin Rin' is the term applied to a koi whose scales exhibit a sparkling effect. 'Kin gin rin' translates to 'gold and silver scales'. A koi with only shining silver scales is referred to as 'ginrin', while one with only shining golden scales is referred to as 'kinrin'. All varieties of koi can have sparkling scales, so each koi variety has kinginrin variants or specimens.

A chemical deposit in the scales of the koi make them 'sparkle.' According to www.perfectfarm.com, sparkling scales were first discovered in 1929 and was called 'gingoke' by Esaburo Hochino.

According to an article by Douglas Dahl: "There are four types Kin Gin Rin scales. Pearl Gin Rin has a sparkle deposit in the center of each scale like a pearl. Diamond Gin Rin or Hiroshima Gin Rin looks like brushed aluminum sparkle. Beta-Gin is where the whole scale sparkles and is the most valued type. Kado-Gin has only the aft edge of each scale covered with this sparkling deposit."

Some experts still debate on whether kinginrin scales add beauty to a koi or lessen it. Indeed, in some koi the kinginrin scalation diminishes some of its strong points such as its color strength. On the other hand, excellent kinginrin scalation can make an otherwise simply average koi stunningly beautiful. In the final analysis therefore, one can say that it really depends on how the sparkling scalation of a kinginrin specimen contributes to the total package of the koi.

A kin gin rin koi is better appreciated under sunlight.

Appreciation Criteria

Color

The color criteria used in judging non-kinginrin counterparts of kinginrin koi apply. In addition, the glitter or sparkle of the kinginrin scales must be very intense. The kinginrin scales must likewise be evenly and generously distributed on the back of the koi.

Pattern

The pattern criteria used in judging non-kinginrin counterparts of kinginrin koi apply.



Gin Rin Kohaku (left), Gin Rin Sanke (center), Gin Rin Showa (right)

KUMONRYU

General Description

'Kumonryu' is the term applied to a [doitsu](#) koi with a 'killer whale' pattern, i.e., a black body with white markings. The term 'kumonryu' translates to 'nine-crested dragon.'" Kumonryu koi are unique in the sense that their sumi (black color) is unstable, allowing them to change their black-and-white patterns even after they have matured. Cases such as when a totally black kumonryu has transformed into a totally white one have even been reported. As such, they are also described as koi that are 'forever tategoi.' The kumonryu is a relatively new koi variety, acquiring a category of its own in the All Japan show only in 1994.

Appreciation Criteria

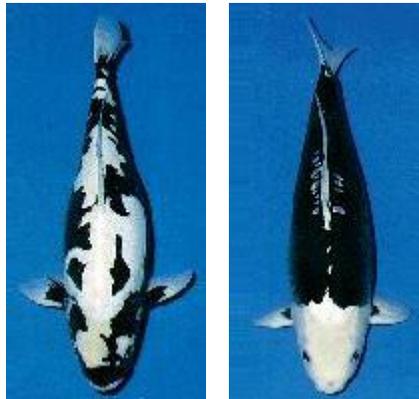
Color

The black and white colors of a kumonryu must be deep and solid. 'Jet-black' and 'snow-white' are common descriptions of how the black and white colors of a kumonryu must appear, respectively.

Pattern

The kumonryu is a doitsu koi, so it may or may not have mirror scales along its dorsal and lateral lines. If it does, the mirror scales must be continuous and nicely aligned. If it doesn't have mirror scales, then it must have no scales at all.

Because of the non-permanence of the sumi of a kumonryu, its pattern must not be a basis for its purchase. The depth and quality of the sumi and the body conformation of the koi must be given much more importance. Many koi hobbyists have bought kumonryu koi based on the black-and-white patterns they saw at the time of buying, only to be disappointed several weeks later to see their koi transform into a less striking specimen.



Kumonryu

KAWARIGOI (previously KAWARIMONO)

General Description

'Kawarigoi' or 'Kawarimono' is the term applied to a koi that can not be classified into any of the standard koi types. Since this is a 'catch-all' category, a lot of established koi varieties fall under it.

An article by [Douglas Dahl](#) entitled '[Koi Classification and Judging Criteria](#)' has given a good description of what this large koi category covers. Quoting the article:

"Included are all of the Karasugoi or crow carp family that are black with various white markings on the body and fins. Depending on how much white you have Hajiro (black with white only on the tail and pectoral fin tips), Hageshiro (black with white on tail and pectoral fin tips and on the head), Yotsushiro (Hageshiro with all white head), Kumonryu (Doitsu koi with killer whale pattern) and Matsukawabake (koi that changes from black to gray depending on water temperature forming a net black pattern).

There is a very new koi that has been put into Kawarimono due to lack of a better place because it is metallic and does not belong in Kawarimono. This is the Bene(red) Kumonryu called Kikokuryu. It is a metallic Kumonryu with a red pattern. It probably should be moved to Hikarimoyo because the black looks metallic so it has black, white and red metallic colors.

Next in favor is Goshiki meaning 5 colors that are white with a red Kohaku pattern and two shades of blue and black netting not only on the red but also on the white. Cool water makes the colors darken. It is important for Goshiki to have a clean red and white head with no sumi markings.

The next favorite is the Chagoi or brown/green tea colored carp. These koi grow fast and very large and become the favorite in the pond by their gluttony. Also in solid colors are the Kigo (yellow koi), Soragoi (gray blue koi), Midorigoi (green koi), Benigo (red koi), Aka Hijiro (red koi with white fin tips) and Shiro Muji (white koi).

Next is a very recent cross between Chagoi and Kohaku or Asagi called Ochiba Shigure. This koi reminds people of autumn leaves because the hi shows up as a bright mustard pattern on a gray body with black netting over the whole body. The Doitsu version of Ochiba Shigure has been called "antique" due to the colors.

The next group is the Kanoko group. Kanoko means "fawn" describing a dappled Kohaku red pattern that looks like cherry blossoms. This group includes Kanoko Kohaku, Kanoko Sanke and Kanoko Showa.

The next group are the Kage (robed)group. They include Kage Shiro Utsuri, Kage Hi Utsuri, and Kage Showa.

The last group are the non-metallic Matsuba koi. They are Aka (red) Matsuba, Ki Matsuba and Shiro Matsuba. There are also Doitsu versions of all of the above."

Appreciation Criteria

Color

Due to the large number of koi varieties under the category of 'Kawarigoi', this page can not describe the color criteria specific to each of them. However, the color criteria discussed in other pages for mainstream koi varieties generally apply to kawarigoi as well. Thus, colors must be deep and solid, with no signs of fading, blurring, spotting, or unwanted tinting anywhere. The shade, hue, and quality of the colors must be consistent throughout the koi.

Pattern

Due to the large number of koi varieties under the category of 'Kawarigoi', this page can not describe the pattern criteria specific to each of them. However, the pattern criteria discussed in other pages for mainstream koi varieties generally apply to kawarigoi with pattern markings as well. For example, markings on the body must be artistically **balanced**. This means that they must not be confined to one side or one end of the koi only. As in any other koi, the markings on a kawarigoi must enhance the total beauty package of the koi.



Kawarimono: Ochiba (left) and Midorigoi (right)

The Ideal Koi Body

Novice koi hobbyists usually buy their first few koi based solely on color and pattern that they like. These are important factors in choosing a koi, but veteran koi judges will tell you that body conformation should be a koi hobbyist's first consideration in choosing a koi. In fact, the scoring sheet of most koi judging events gives 50% weight to koi body conformation. Body conformation is therefore much more **important** than what most people think.

First and foremost, a koi must not have any deformities, i.e., missing fins, crooked body, etc. It must be healthy, with no signs of ulcers, open skin, smashed mouths, disease, or infections anywhere in the body.



Figure 1. This koi was released in the river by its Japanese breeder for something that most of us will not notice: a mild spine deformity

The head of the koi must be symmetrical and of correct size in relation to its body - not too big, nor too small. If the transition from the gill plate of the head to the body is not smooth, then the head is probably incorrectly proportioned. The snout must also be of the correct shape and size - not too short or flat that the koi looks like a parrot, nor too protruding. Watch out for excessively large or small fins - traits easily overlooked by a novice.

Novice hobbyists tend to look at color and pattern first before body conformation probably because they are more familiar with these criteria, since most literature describe pattern and color criteria more comprehensively than body conformation. Then again, finding the right words to describe a 'correct' body can indeed be difficult. Thus, hobbyists become familiar with it only after looking at many, many photos of what a 'good' body is.

The body of a koi must conform as closely as possible to the industry-accepted standard, i.e., it must be thick and torpedo-shaped (large at the middle and tapering gradually towards both ends). It must be massive at the tail stout and shoulders. Excessively fat or thin koi must naturally be avoided.

No koi is perfect, so a koi must not be judged by its imperfections. In fact, some textbook imperfections actually enhance how a koi looks - this is the reason why judging a koi does not consist of totaling up its individual pluses and minuses. Instead, a koi is judged as one **total** package in terms of how pleasant it looks and how it carries itself.



Figure 2. Example of a koi that still lacks body mass; this is a good-looking koi nonetheless

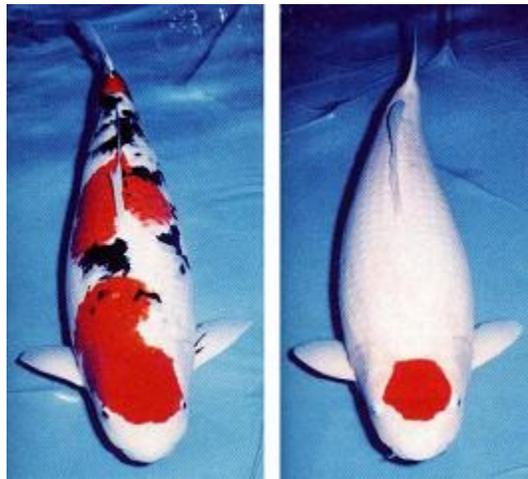


Figure 3. Examples of koi that have good body volume without being too fat; compare these koi with the ones in Figures 1 and 2