

# Water, Water Everywhere

**Water features have become the rage all across the world in making home and office landscapes more beautiful and enjoyable. In this issue, SEAB looks at why they are more popular than ever.**



Pictures courtesy of Oase.

For thousands of years, man has been drawn to water, not just for its life sustaining qualities, but equally for its awe inspiring beauty and power. Whether shimmering in its stillness and reflective splendour or splashing and tumbling to its final resting place, water is a welcome addition to any landscape.

Furthermore, nothing can match the sight and sound of water in motion for capturing the attention of passersby and for engendering a sense of serenity.

As more people have become more aware of water's mystical power, a vast array of suppliers have come into being who can create or restore every conceivable type of water feature. Water features can be broken into two separate categories -- natural and architectural. Natural features include small and large ponds, waterfalls and streams.

Architectural features consist of small pools, large pools, weirs, fountains and cascades. Each type of water feature offers a unique opportunity to express one's individuality. A well-chosen water feature is one that harmonises with the style of the garden and functions as an integral part of the landscape -- be it a tiny balcony garden or sprawling greenspace.

A feature that most people would consider appropriate for the "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" set is becoming more accessible and affordable. Landscape contractors are catching on to this phenomenon, too. Water features, they are quickly realising, can greatly increase a property's value and help present a first-class impression to potential buyers.

Better yet, the latest developments in the design and equipment related to water features have made them easier to install and less of a headache for their customers to maintain.

## INCREASING DEMAND FOR WATER FEATURES

The worlds of residential and commercial water landscapes, although quite similar in their features, can be distinctly different in both motivation and design. Residential water features are more personal, for pleasure and stress relief. They are normally of a more subtle and subdued nature.

Commercial applications tend to require a much higher visual impact and are more spectacular by design to attract attention to the project. Commercial applications do not normally lend themselves to the relationship that is established in private applications.

Fueled by this growing appreciation among more end users, water features have progressed from being an extension of a decorative feature to a healing aid. Nowadays, consumers are increasingly looking toward water features, not only for their aesthetic value, but for their therapeutic benefits as well. The flowing water of either a fountain or waterfall can greatly improve the natural energy within a place. This holds especially true to Asia, where most Chinese believe that water in a garden attracts and refreshes energy. A well-designed and constructed water feature will cause good feelings to bubble quietly into a home, while a garden pond in an office will reflect and enhance a corporate culture.

Unfortunately, with the increased popularity also come many myths. Among these are: that water features are only for the rich; that they waste water; that they are mosquito-breeding sites; that they are too difficult for most people to manage; or that they require many harsh chemicals to prevent them becoming polluted.

Commenting on the growth, Mr Peter Kok, managing director, Home & Garden of Oase Asia Pacific Pte Ltd said that outdoor recreation among people has accounted for the rapid popularity of water features. "People are spending more time and money on water features these days," he said during a recent press conference.

As a leading supplier of fountain pumps and filtration systems for garden ponds, Oase has been working closely with its customers to provide a comprehensive solution. The company is headquartered in Horstel, Germany, with the main geographical markets being Germany, United Kingdom and the Benelux region.

Another water feature specialist that SEAB spoke to said that water features are very much in vogue at the moment in Singapore. According to Mr Terry Chang, COO of Aqua Works & Engineering Pte Ltd in Singapore, water features are very much part of Singapore's urbanscapes. "Today, every residential development has at least an entrance water feature or something tucked away within their landscapes," he said. Mr Chang added that water features are every bit as popular in Southeast Asia's landscapes.

Established in 1993, Acro-Asia Resources Pte Ltd (AAR) started as an equipment supplier primarily to trade specialists in the landscape and leisure water industries. Since then, the company has evolved to become one of the major distributors of quality aquarium, pets and garden brands and products in Singapore. The company's Landscape and Pool Division remains an important part of its overall business.



Commenting on current trends in water features, Mr Kok said that ponds have become a rapidly growing segment mainly because people have been spending more time outdoors to grill, garden and entertain. According to Oase, the European market for pond related products is around Euro 400 million, which is growing at around 6 percent per annum.

Mr Chang also pointed out that small indoor features such as ponds are becoming very fashionable in very recent years. "The market for water features is enjoying a consistent demand for pond features such as koi ponds," he said.

### **INNOVATIONS IN WATER FEATURES**

Over the years, increasing demand for water features have stimulated the development of new concepts and technology that are carefully geared towards making the experience of water features more enjoyable and successful.

The Oase's Eurofol pond-liner is one of the leading Do-It-Yourself (DIY) starter kits that allows homeowners to use this membrane to line the surface of the dug-up pond without the use of concrete. According to Oase, this DIY trend in pond construction has become a leading choice among homeowners in Europe and North America who are seeking a faster and more convenient way to build a pond. Sales of the product have grown at a rate of 5-7 percent over the last 10 years, said the company.

Mr Matthias Echelmeyer, International Sales Director of Oase GmbH & Co. KG said that the DIY trend has a big potential in Asia, particularly in Singapore, Malaysia and China. "The DIY trend has spread throughout Europe and North America, and has yet to catch on in Asia. Asia is a big, untapped market as most of the ponds are installed by specialised contractors using concrete, which not only costs more, but takes more time to lay and cure. In tandem with GDP growth in Asian countries, Asian homeowners are increasingly paying more attention to enhancing their living environment," he added.

"They would be pleasantly surprised to find how easy and cost-effective it is to design and build their own ponds to enjoy, according to whatever size and shape they prefer," Mr Echelmeyer explained.

Oase's Eurofol pond liner is able to create ponds of every conceivable shape as concrete is not required. All that is required is for the particular shape to be dug out, followed by lining Eurofol on the freshly-dug ground and securing the liner with racks, and the pond is ready to be filled with water, aquatic plants and fish. Without concrete, homeowners can plant landscaping right to the water's edge instead of having to hide unsightly concrete, thereby creating a more natural looking water feature. With the DIY kit, ponds can be built within a few days instead of weeks as curing of concrete is not needed.

Liner ponds like Oase's have plenty of appeal because of their ease of installation and relative low cost. One of the disadvantages of liner ponds is that one is restricted to a certain shape and the hole he or she digs must fit the liner exactly.

On the other hand, a concrete pond is tough and a properly constructed pond will last indefinitely. One will not cause damage by walking in it when she or he wants to clean out the pond. In addition, a concrete pond can incorporate features that cannot be put into other types of pond.

A drainage pipe and valve can be installed in the bottom to allow for easy cleaning. Water lily beds and marginal planting beds can be built into the base and sides so that planting containers are unnecessary.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Despite the rapid growth of water features, many large challenges remain. One of the challenges facing water feature specialists is the current slump in

the construction industry in Singapore and in some parts of Southeast Asia.

But all is not gloom and doom for the water feature industry. Mr Chang believed that the current challenges facing the industry will serve to stimulate the development of new design and themes. "Companies will need to actively launch new designs and reinvest in new technology to stimulate the waning buyer interest," explained Mr Chang.

Commenting on emerging trends, he said that "there will be a trend towards using light, lasers, fire and other elements to increase the impact of water effects." Some water specialists have gone one step ahead in terms of developing unusual devices that combine both fire and water.

Whatever its size or style, new water features are definitely worth the wait!



## PRODUCT SHOWCASE



Buzon screwjack pedestals were used at the International Finance Centre in Hong Kong.

### WATER FEATURES -

#### **BUZON PEDESTAL INTERNATIONAL**

Buzon Pedestals are widely used around the world for the construction of exterior raised floors, terraces and pedestrian areas. Their popularity can be attributed to the easy and high speed application, and the fact that they can be used for all types of decking materials, including tiles (stone, ceramic, cement or wood), timber decking (for which Buzon is now offering also a new, unique clips system with no need for screws) and industrial gratings.

Buzon pedestals are made of durable polypropylene, and are millimetrically adjustable in height. The smallest pedestal starts at 17 mm, and those above 35 mm are adjustable in height (up to 620 mm or more, depending on the number of couplers used). The pedestals are now even available in transparent polycarbonate material, for use with transparent glass tiles.

Architects appreciate the fact that a terrace or pedestrian area made with the Buzon pedestal system is completely flat, even for large areas, with no presence of valleys, design disturbing gratings or other drainage systems. This

has become possible through the use of Buzon's patented slope compensation device (PH5), which enables a perfectly flat decking on top of a sloping underground or roof.

Landscape architects are also increasingly using the Buzon pedestal system in water features or fountain projects. Besides the aforementioned advantages, another benefit is that there is no need for sealants between the tiles anymore. Sealants may change in colour or accumulate dirt over time, marring the aesthetics of the water features. This can be avoided by using the Buzon pedestal system to support the tiles or slabs, as the Buzon pedestal system uses, on top of its pedestals, spacer tabs that are available in various thicknesses (0, 2, 4.5, 6 or 10 mm). This creates a space between the tiles, through which water can flow easily, and in case the tiles are above water level, this will automatically ensure a perfect drainage of the falling water. For terraces or pedestrian areas, this optimal drainage performance ensures that the tiles will not change in colour, which frequently happens as result of chemical reactions between the natural decking material with, for example, acid rain. Another clear advantage is that the tiles can be easily removed for maintenance work.

Thanks to these exceptional features of the Buzon pedestal system, they are increasingly being used for fountains and other water features. Prime examples can be found at the water features of the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay in Singapore, International Finance Centre in Hong Kong, as well as Roppongi Hills in Tokyo, Japan.

For further details, visit [www.buzon-world.com](http://www.buzon-world.com).

### POOLS, SPAS & FOUNTAINS -

#### **LATICRETE**



The Laticrete Pool, Spa and Fountain System is composed of time and job proven Laticrete tile installation products which have been successfully installed around the world for over 40 years. In Asia, Laticrete International Asia Pacific Pte Ltd provides single source responsibility for these

demanding, high performance applications. The Laticrete Pool, Spa and Fountain System includes Laticrete Latex Fortified Mortars that provide four times greater bond strength than conventional portland cement mortars, and Laticrete Latex Fortified Adhesive and Grouts that provide superior resistance to attack from pool water treatment chemicals, pH imbalance and delamination from movement. Other key accessory items such as waterproofing and sound control membranes, underlayments, sealers and cleaners complete the range. Safe, easy-to-install and water-cleanable, Laticrete Pool, Spa and Fountain System products reduce labour, material costs and maintenance.

Customers can expect a full-service solution from Laticrete, who will assist architectural staff with proper specifications, samples and details. The company's global network assures that you will have on-site assistance when and where you need it.

For further information, visit [www.laticrete.com](http://www.laticrete.com) or e-mail [tilefix@singnet.com.sg](mailto:tilefix@singnet.com.sg).