

AquaScapingWorld

Making Magic In Glass Boxes

Inside the ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery
Aquascape In Focus: **World Before Columbus**
Vietnam Aquascaping Competition Results
SCAPE at the Orange County Fair
IAPLC 2010 Results



www.aquascapingworld.com

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Letter from the Editor

Inside our November/December Issue

I know you all have been waiting patiently for the next latest and greatest issue of the AquaScaping World Magazine. I am proud to say we are back and better than ever!

ASW has high professional standards, and therefore we are switching from a monthly publication to a bi-monthly schedule to allow us ample time to develop the articles and magazine. With the extra time, you can be sure future articles will be more in-depth, more comprehensive, and touch extensively upon aquascaping techniques and activities from all over the world. Now, let's get right to it.

In this issue, you'll find an array of aquascaping competition results from the Aqua Design Amano, International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest 2010 and the Aquabird Vietnam, Aquadesign Aquascaping Contest. This year's participants have continued to push the bar in creativity and execution.

Our Aquascape in Focus for this issue comes from Italian Aquascaper, Pasquale Buonpane and his "World Before Columbus" layout. This layout achieved an impressive 106 ranking in the IAPLC 2010. Find out a little more about the aquascape and how you can make one yourself.

Also, the ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery in Japan is a must visit for any planted aquarium enthusiast. While many of us can't make the trip to Japan, we can live through BJ Ruttenberg. He takes us on his adventure to the premier aquascaping headquarters.

Finally, planted aquarium promotion has made great strides in the United States through the Southern California Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts Club (SCAPE). SCAPE hosted an aquascaping booth at one of the largest fairs in Southern California, helping to draw new members to the hobby. Check out what they did, and maybe you can promote planted aquaria in your region too!

Happy Aquascaping everybody!

John Nguyen
Editor in Chief
AquaScaping World Magazine

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Competing against Aquascapers



Discover how this aquascape placed among the Top 100
in the ADA International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest 2008

the Best in the World



By Marcin Pęczek

In 2008, my aquascape “Green Recess” ranked a whopping 77 out of 1200 entries in the 2008 International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest. Let me tell you, it wasn’t all the easy.

My name is Marcin (Martin) Pęczek, I’m 34 years old and I live in Lodz, Poland. I have a wonderful wife Anna and daughter Maggie (2.5 years old). Both of them love waterworld. I studied chemistry, which is sometimes very useful in aquaria.

With some breaks in between, I have been addicted to aquaria since I was seven. My first aquarium was metal-framed and I raised *Xiphophorus helleri* there. Later, the time came for my first silicon glued tank with plants and fish. It was a typical community tank, which after a few years it was torn down. I owe my current comeback to aquaria to my wife (at that time my girlfriend) as she was the one who bought me my first fish. When I first heard about Dutch



Style Aquascaped Aquariums, I was really pleased by the vision of a tank, where plants are the most important. A few years later, on a Polish discussion forum, I read about the famous aquascaper Takashi Amano and his “Nature Aquarium”. Since then I began learning how to arrange aquarium layouts to conform to the “Nature Style”.

Inspiration of “Green Recess”

The inspiration of Green Recess was from one of the aquascapes, made by Takashi

Amano, which I saw in *The Style of ADA catalogue* (page 68-69 of that book). I wanted to challenge myself and see if I can manage to create something similar. Of course my aquascape turned out completely different in the end, but I still learned a lot of new techniques and I realized that trying to copy an existing aquarium is not as easy as it appears to be.

I began the layout in September 2007 and I continued to nurture it until July 2008. After some attempts with red plants, in

Spring I went all the way and aimed the scape into my favorite, all green plants.

As the layout developed, the title of this aquascape came to my mind when I noticed that when I gazed into the scape, I felt drawn into a quiet and relaxed state. I imagine the feeling is similar to how a fish feels while resting under driftwood – that’s where the “Recess” part of the title came from.

Arranging the Hardscape

The rocks used in “Green Recess” are called Manten Stone. I received them from my good friend Adam Paszczela.

Beside being simply pleasing to the eye, the Manten Stone functions to separate the substrate and the sand. This was essential in keeping the layout clean and composed. The lines defined by the rock layout created a foundation for which the viewer could return to as their eyes move slowly from the plants, driftwood and the rocks.

Driftwood setting was not difficult since I only had two pieces of it. I just placed them into the tank and I was satisfied with the result instantly.

Aquascaping the Plants

The main plant in this aquascape is one of my favorites: *Eleocharis sp.*. This time I decided to buy *Eleocharis parvula* from Tropica. The variation of *Eleocharis* is incredible when compared to *E. parvula* from non-commercial farm which I had in the previous aquascape. Tropica’s *Eleocharis*’ leaves (needles) are more delicate and they bow down to the substrate, while growing, so the plant is not so high.

Eleocharis sp. is a relatively easy to grow plant so I recommend it for the beginners. Planting does not require much experience. It is enough to take it

A Bud of Sagittaria Flower emerges from the tangles of moss patches.



out from the basket, clean it from the wool, split into several portions and then put the plant into the substrate where we want to. After 2-3 months we will have a beautiful, green lawn. In order to speed up the effect it is good to cut the plant very low after planting, removing the emerged grown leaves, so that algae will not grow on them, and the new submerge leaves will appear sooner.

I trimmed *Eleocharis* every two months in different spots which allowed me to achieve the natural effect of higher and lower grass. I took this idea right from the wild lawn in front of my house. The overall effect created a more chaotic and wild (but natural) atmosphere in the layout.

My second favorite, is a

grassy plant called *Sagittaria subulata*. In the beginning I didn't plan it to be in this aquascape; it is correct to say that it appeared surprisingly – I must have left an old bulb of the plant in the substrate when forming it. After some time the *Sagittaria* grew so large that I spent long hours with the scissors, trimming it back so that it would not dominate the aquascape.

Another of my favorite plants, *Hemianthus micranthemoides* (HM) has a particular leaf structure with only two leaves in the vertical that I like. It is very good plant to trim and form. In my first aquascape, which I sent to 2005 International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest, with frequent and low trimming I created a HM lawn in the front

part of aquarium. This time I didn't need it so I let it grow as it wished to. Two months after planting I did the first trimming at 1/3 of its height to let it grow denser. After that, I trimmed HM regularly on different heights to increase the growth density. The final forming was made a few days before the photo was taken, I trimmed only stems which were too long and did not look good.

Trimming Plants

I know you're thinking that I trim the plants regularly to get them "groomed" into the shape I want. However this is quite the opposite. I rarely force the plants to anything, and even when I try to do so, it is even more rarely achieved. That's why I usually let the plants grow as they wish and

where they wish to in my aquarium. Of course there are moments when I have to use scissors, but I do it rather on impulse, without a specific scheme. Sometimes a plant mass need to be trimmed so that fish have the space to swim, or other times while looking at the aquascape something just doesn't look fine to me. Trimming is a moment which I sometimes regard and sometimes I am satisfied with.

Substrate Design

The substrate I used is a few bags of new ADA Aqua Soil Amazonia Normal and Powder, and a few liters of used Aqua Soil from previous aquascapes. At the very bottom I also added Bacter 100, Clear Super and Tourmaline BC to start up the bacterial colonies. In the front, as a decoration sand, I used ADA Bright Sand.

The substrate height was 2.5 cm in the foreground and about 7.5 cm in the background. As mentioned previously I used Manten stones to separate the sand from the Amazonia. Although the stones did a great job at keeping the two substrates apart, of course my shrimps would dig up the Amazonia and dirty up the sand. I had to clean the sand every so often using 4/6 mm silicon hose during water changes. A few times when it was too difficult to clean, I was forced to replace part of sand foreground with fresh portion.

Tank Maintenance is an Everyday Activity

From daily fertilizing, weekly water changes, and the occasional trimming, it all adds up to a lot of effort to keep a healthy aquascaped aquarium.

I made a fertilizing schedule for each day. The beginning was

Sunday, 1/3 water change (about 22 liters) and progressively I would add various amounts of fertilizers each day.

For the most part, the bigger trimmings (stems, moss, *eleocharis* sp.) are done before the water change on Sundays. The other days I often do small trimmings with scissors to keep things tidy, especially when it came to stopping new runners of *Sagittaria subulata*.

Overcoming Algae

In this aquascape I had some problems with Blue-green Algae (BGA), especially on the sand by the front glass, and on the rocks. In order to get rid of them I used ADA Phytton Git, which is a liquid supplement that can stimulate stem growth, and chemically, at the same time can help deter the growth of algae. However, the best method on BGA was removing the dirty part



of sand and replacing it with fresh sand. I removed BBA mechanically, using Pro Picker from ADA – it is a great tool especially in difficult to reach places.

Of course the best way to control algae are frequent water changes, stabilized fertilizing and keeping the tank clean and tidy as a whole, so that low levels of organic carbon appear. Algae eaters such as *Caridina multidentata* and *Crossocheilus siamensis* are also helpful, but they don't always want to eat algae.

Fish Selection: “If it ain't broke then why fix it?”

In this aquascape I used Green Neon Tetras (*Paracheirodon simulans*) from the previous aquascape. From the beginning I felt they fit this layout just as well so I did not consider any other species. I did however increase the school size up to 40-50 fish.

Favorite Aspects of Green Recess

I think I like the mid-left of the aquascape the best. Many species of plants join together there – *Eleocharis parvula*, *Glossostigma elatinoides*, *Microsorium pteropus* 'Narrow', *Sagittaria subulata*, *Taxiphyllum alternans* and moreover Manten Stones and driftwood. The aquascape in this area is very detailed, which dynamically changes as plants grow and infiltrate each other. I feel, that this part of layout is the best, and everyone will find something interesting here.

Prevailing Challenges

The biggest problem (and most tiring) was keeping the sand clean and BBA occurrence from the rocks. Despite using the ADA Phytan Git, cleaning the stones and frequent water changes



(sometimes even twice a week) they always came back after some time. At the end (in May) cutting out new runners of *Sagittaria*, while attempting not to destroy the well grown aquascape became quite tiring.

Accomplishment at the 2008 IAPLC

Personally I was very surprised that I achieved a dreamed place in the first 100. I ranked #77 among over 1200 entries. I have already seen this year's contest album, and I think that the participants level in the first 100 was very high as always, and I am even more delighted

and honored to be graded among the other beautiful layouts.

If I had to make this aquascape once more, I think I would change the arrangement of stones in the central part. Especially one of them is not fine for me, I didn't manage to soften the bold driftwood impression. But all in all, I wouldn't change a lot, I still like this layout and working on it, even though it was sometimes difficult, “Green Recess” gave me lot of pleasure. 🌊



Step 1: After placing Bacter 100, Clear Super and Tourmaline BC at the base, use a plastic divider to separate the front and back areas. Fill in the back area with ADA Aqua Soil Amazonia.

Step 2: Now that the back is filled in, proceed to place the ADA Bright sand in the front area. Be sure to keep the plastic/cardboard divider in place to get the substrate curve desired. .



Step 3: When both sections are filled in, carefully remove the divider. Do this slowly as to minimize mixing of the two substrates.

Step 4: Begin arranging your hardscape starting with the stones. Here Manten Stones were used to help maintain the division between the Aqua Soil and the Sand. Moss covered driftwood was placed to maximize the use of vertical space



Step 5: After the hardscape is arranged to the desired look, *Eleocharis parvula* was planted through the background evenly. . Over time, with minimal trimming, the plants will fill in with a natural appearance.

"Green Recess" Maintenance & Fertilization Schedule						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1/3 water change (about 22 litres)	Brighty K 2ml GB Step 2 2ml GBS Lights 3ml Green Bacter 6-10 drops Green Gain 6-10 drops	Brighty K 2ml GBS Shade 2ml ECA 2-4 drops (seldom)	Brighty K 2ml GBS Shade 2ml	Brighty K 2ml GB Step 2 2ml GBS Lights 3ml	Brighty K 2ml GBS Shade 2ml ECA 2-4 drops (seldom)	Brighty K 2ml GBS Shade 2ml



Green Recess (IAPLC 2008 entry)

Dimensions: 60x35x30cm

Volume: 63 liters

Light: 2x15W fluorescent tube 7500 K - Arcadia Freshwater

Photoperiod: 8 hours

Substrate: ADA Substrate System

(Bacter100, Tourmaline BC, Clear Super, Aqua Soil
Amazonia and BrightSand)

Fertilization: ADA - Brighty K, Green Brighty STEP 2, Green Brighty
Special SHADE, Green Brighty Special LIGHTS and
Green Gain, Green Bacter, ECA.

CO₂ Injection: Pressurized CO₂ with ceramic diffuser



Plant List

Echinodorus tenellus,
Eleocharis parvula,
Glossostigma elatinoides,
Hemianthus micranthemoides,
Microsorium pteropus 'Narrow',
Sagittaria subulata,
Taxiphyllum barbieri

Fauna

Crossocheilus siamensis,
Otocinclus sp.,
Paracheiroidon simulans,
Caridina multidentata,
Neocaridina heteropoda var. red.



Wild, Wild...Green (IAPLC 2007 entry)

Dimensions: 60x35x30cm

Volume: 63 liters

Light: 2x15W fluorescent tube 7500 K - Arcadia Freshwater

Photoperiod: 8 hours

Substrate: Aqua Soil Amazonia - Normal, Bacter 100 and Multi Bottom.

Fertilization: ADA - Brighty K, Green Brighty STEP 3, Green Bacter, ECA.

Green Brighty Special SHADE, and Green Gain,

CO₂ Injection: Pressurized CO₂ with ceramic diffuser



Plant List

Cryptocoryne beckettii "petchii"
Eleocharis "parvula"
Hemianthus micranthemoides
Microsorium pteropus "Narrow"
Microsorium pteropus "Philippine"
Rotala sp. "Green"
Sagittaria subulata
Vesicularia montagnei
Vesicularia ferriei

Fauna

Crossocheilus siamensis
Hemigrammus hyanuary
Otocinclus sp.
Paracheirodon simulans
Caridina multidentata
Caridina sp. "Tiger"



Tigers in the Jungle (IAPLC 2006 entry)

Dimensions: 80x35x40cm

Volume: 112 liters

Light: 2x18W - Philips Master 865

Photoperiod: 8 hours

Substrate: Quartz gravel about 3-5mm and Aqualit - Hobby

Fertilization: Planta Gainer Classic, Planta Gainer Macro,
Planta Gainer Ferro+

CO₂ Injection: Pressurized CO₂ with ceramic diffuser



Plant List

Blyxa japonica,
Microsorium pteropus "Narrow",
Sagittaria subulata

Fauna

Limia nigrofasciata,
Caridina multidentata,
Neritina natalensis



Dream-land of Limia (IAPLC 2005 entry)

Dimensions: 80x35x40cm

Volume: 112 liters

Light: 2x18W - Philips Master 865

Photoperiod: 8 hours

Substrate: Quartz gravel about 3-5mm and Aqualit - Hobby

Fertilization: Planta Gainer Classic, Planta Gainer Macro,
Planta Gainer Ferro+

CO₂ Injection: Pressurized CO₂ with ceramic diffuser



Plant List

Blyxa japonica,
Hemianthus micranthemoides,
Microsorium pteropus "Windelov",
Rotala rotundifolia,
Sagittaria subulata.

Fauna

Limia nigrofasciata,
Caridina multidentata,
Neritina natalensis.

Southern California Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts

SCAPE Exhibits at the Orange County Fair

By Billie G.





The idea of a local planted tank club started on an international planted tank forum by people located in and around Southern California as a discussion about trading aquatic plants locally. As the discussion thread progressed and people located in and around Los Angeles and Orange Counties started trading plants, it was mentioned that some locals ought to create their own club. The ideas and suggestions started flowing with what a local club should look like.

There were a few enthusiasts that had the time, resources and knowledge to create an online forum and come up with a club name. It was discussed that the club should serve those in the ornamental

fish hobby whose focus is on planted tanks and reside in the Southern California area.

This is how the Club Name – Southern California Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts – was created. This name turned out to be quite synonymous with the art aspect of creating a Scape, which is short for Aquascaping.

The club did not fair too well in the beginning and its' leaders became disinterested. It then changed hands in February 2008 and the membership dues were dropped. This is when the new SCAPE started to flourish with activity and the membership sky rocketed. There are currently 321 active members from all over California with monthly meeting averaging 70 people in attendance.

The membership geographical locale covers areas as far North as San Jose and as far South as El Cajon and Tijuana Mexico – all points West with some members attending meetings as far East as Phoenix, Arizona.

Members gather every third Sunday of the month where there is some sort of educational presentation or demonstration followed by a live auction where members can get a multitude of rare and exotic plants including fauna and inverts at bargain basement prices. The club's success is primarily based on its' Vision and statement of purpose.

SCAPE is a local, non profit group formed of the most dedicated Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts in Southern California who, together, form a



movement to promote awareness and knowledge of the science, art, and beauty of planted tanks among both hobbyists and retailers.

If hobbyists support their communities through education and the local retailers, the community and retailers will support the club!

Promoting the Hobby

SCAPE is always looking for ways to promote awareness and education about the hobby. In April 2007 a display booth was procured during the America's Family Pet Expo at the Costa Mesa Fairgrounds. It turned out to prove quite successful by introducing ourselves into an environment where people love and care about their pets including fish. It was there

where SCAPE was visible to thousands of people in a single weekend.

One of which was the assistant coordinator at Centennial Farms which is located at the Costa Mesa Fairgrounds. He felt the Club's educational purposes aligned with theirs and invited the Club to display planted tanks in their floral building.

“Visitors were very impressed by the planted aquariums’ beauty.”

It was a good match! The public paraded through the floral building in amazement as they

gazed at the planted tanks. Many did not realize they could bring the same beauty and techniques from their flower gardens into their fish tanks.

Transporting Aquariums

It is best to plan the tank months in advance so that the tank has a chance to mature and all the plants settle in nicely. Tanks 10 gallons or less are much easier to transport and set back up. The process entails draining the tank as much as possible to eliminate sloshing during transport. Water sloshing back and forth will ruin many hours of plant placement and rooting.

Remove as much equipment as possible and cover with plastic wrap to trap moisture and air. Ambient temperatures need to stay



consistent with no direct sunlight while in a car. Setting them back up is pretty tedious and takes delicate care.

Focus of the Exhibits

The exhibits focused on style and ease of setting up and maintaining a planted tank. We tried to cover the basic tanks set ups with as little tanks possible. We had a 10 gallon high tech Malaya Biotope, a half gallon all natural Dutch style aquarium, a 5 gallon medium tech Iwagumi, a Wabi-kusa and a one gallon low tech Betta paradise. Below each tank was a descriptions of each tank on display discussing the type of aquascape, flora and fauna names/scientific names, maintenance, lighting, etc.

Visitors Impression

Visitors were very impressed by the planted aquariums' beauty. Some had no idea there was such a thing as tropical aquatic plants. Others were interested in the design aspect, while more were interested in the

science aspect. As their education about the symbiotic relationships between the flora and fauna increased, the more they wanted to transform their own fish tanks into planted aquariums.

For those first timers who just loved the tanks usually asked, how much would it cost to set up these types of aquarium? People with previous aquarium experience asked about where to buy such beautiful plant specimens and the equipment that was used. Are they easy to take care of? How often do you do water changes?

The ones with more technical and detailed questions asked to join our online forum where we gave them SCAPE cards with our online information.

For most SCAPE members, it was an amazing experience to talk about something they really love to do. Sharing information with people who are complete strangers enlists them to want to get involved because they see and can even feel your passion.



One of several exhibits, this Betta Heaven shows visitors a Betta Bowl can be more than just a fish in a plain bowl.



E X H I B I T

Malaya Water World Biotope

Malaya- South East Asia area that includes Borneo and Sarawak. Located In Southeast Asia, just north of the Equator, the exotic, tropical islands and lands of Malaysia contain some of the most beautiful beaches on the planet and a collection of unrivaled rainforests and national parks.

Bios - Greek Life and or organism

Topos - Greek for place

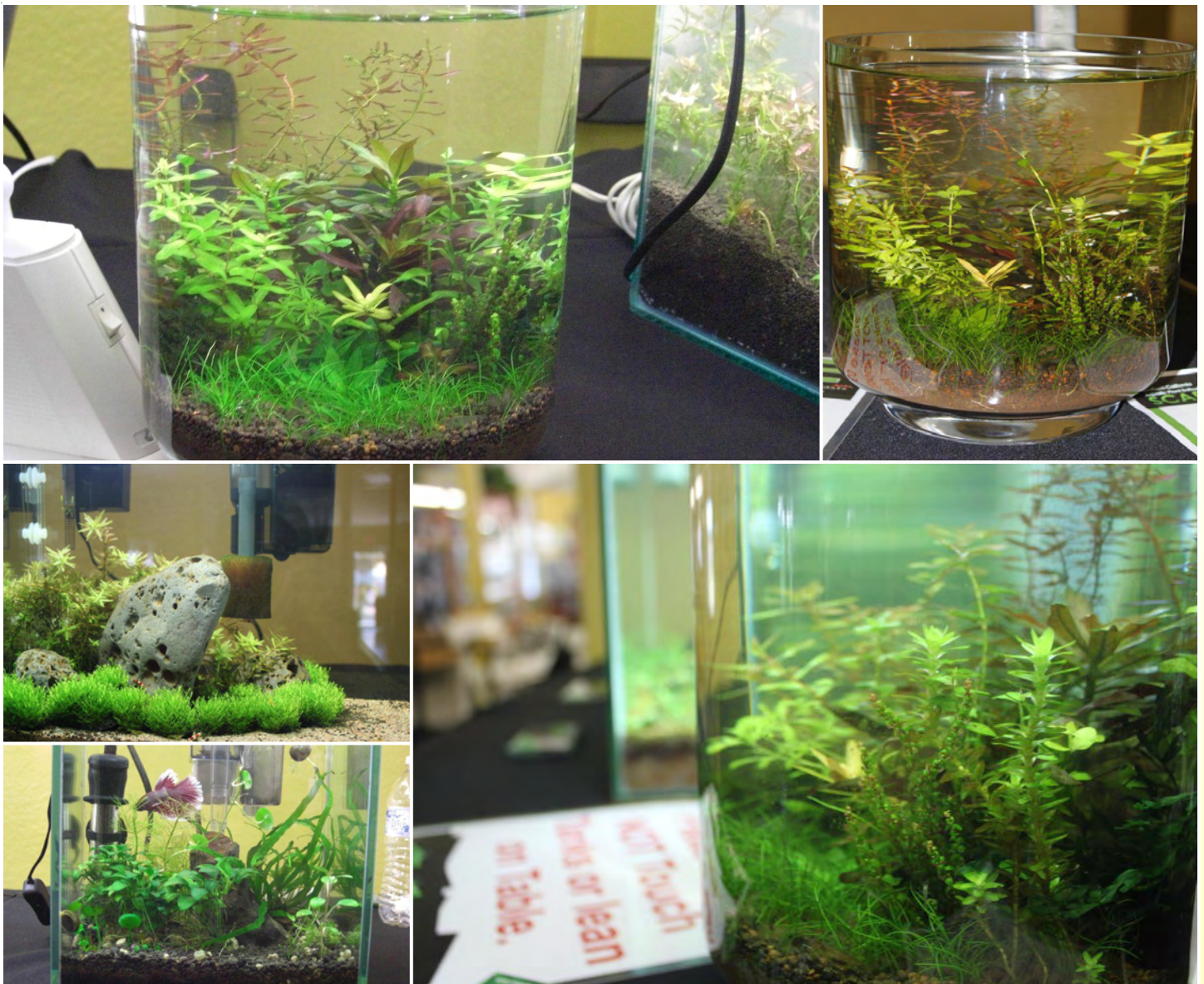
Biotope - Greek for where life lives. Habitat specific to a region of the world.

This aquarium represents a small example of aquatic life in the slow Malayan streams. The soil is rich with mineral and acidic (low PH of 6.5 or lower) due to the slow streams allowing decaying plant material to settle to the bottom. Water is clear but with a yellow tinge due to tanins being released by plant material. Constant tropical weather maintains a temperature of 26 C (78 F) and above. This environment allows for an abundant amount of life in the Malayan streams.

Equipment: 10 gallon aquarium, 36watt of lighting 6700 kelvin/10,000 kelvin color spectrum, Substrate (soil) ADA Malaya substrate mimics Malayan water conditions. Heater keeps temp at 78F, filter. Pressurized CO2 maintains healthy plant growth.

Flora: Cryptocryne Parva, Rotala sp. green, Myriophyllum matagrossense (native to America but added for aesthetic reasons).

Fauna: Caridina sp. Malaya (Malaya Shrimp), Lymnaeidae (pond snails)



Future of SCAPE and the Hobby

Events such as this one allow us to promote the hobby and get more people involved in planted aquariums and aquascaping.

I would say Southern California is already trying to catch up with the front lines of the hobby with the likes of Japan, Germany, Taiwan, China and the rest of the world. The geographic location of California being nearer to Asia is an advantage for us hobbyists specifically with the influx of new and existing species and technologies to our existing market.

We continue to pursue excellence in aquascaping designs, plant cultivation and breeding by being more active in our monthly meetings. We try to hold more "How To" seminars especially to new recruits. We seek the help of sponsors by reaching out to big and small entrepreneurs in our areas who are directly or indirectly related to the hobby.

SCAPE has been invited back to display exhibits and educate fair goers in 2011. Other planned events have not been inked yet, but we look forward to connecting with the San Diego community in some capacity in 2011.

SCAPE has roving meetings every third Sunday of Month. Club membership is free and all information about SCAPE and upcoming meetings/activities and events can be found on the S C A P E forum (www.socalaquascapers.com).



EXHIBIT



Wabi Kusa Cube

Wabi - Japanese sense of esthetic simplicity
Kusa - Grass

Wabi Kusa was the name given by Takasi Amano to an emerged/submerged aquarium. A Wabi Kusa consist of a packed ball of soil surrounded by aquatic moss. The ball is the media used to grow aquatic plants that are able to adapt to an open air environment. Wabi Kusa is one of the easiest aquariums to start and maintain. A bright window can be the source of light. No filter or heater are needed. Just weekly partial water changes is required. Although a long time and patients must be taken into account in order to allow the plants to adapt from their aquatic environment, to an air environment.

Flora:

Sagina subulata (Irish moss), Glossostigma elatinoides (glosso) , Marselia minuta (dwarf four leaf clover). Eleocharis parvula (dwarf hairgrass). Rotala indica, Taxiphyllum alternans (Taiwan Moss).

Fauna:

Neocaridina heteropoda (red cherry shrimp), Lymnaeidae (pond snail)

For more information on Wabi kusa please visit SCAPE
[Www.socalaquascapers.com](http://www.socalaquascapers.com)



Iwagumi Style Aquarium

An Iwagumi style tank focuses on simplicity. The main focus of this style are the rocks in the tank. This is because the Japanese word "Iwagumi" translates in English to rock formation. There are usually only three rocks or an odd amount, a couple types of plants and one type of schooling fish.

Plants/ Flora

Riccia fluitans
Rotala sp. 'Green'
Rotala macranda

Animals/ Fauna

Yellow Shrimp - *Neocaridina heteropoda* var. yellow



SCAPE
Southern California
Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts


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Aquabird Vietnam



“Vietnamese aquascapes become much more than a visually designed layout...



Aquadesign Aquascaping Contest Results 2010



By **Nguyen Quang Hung**
Ngo Truong Thinh
Dao Sy Hiep

Aquabird Vietnam (ABV) recently released their results for their regional annual aquascaping contest called the Aquadesign Contest (ABV Contest).

This contest was first organized in 2005 by the administration team of the Aquabird Vietnam Forums and has grown tremendously each year. The contest is financially supported through voluntary donations from the Vietnamese aquascaping community and the administration team. One particular member, Dui Manh Tien (Tienbm), has been one of the primary sponsors and active organizer of the contest.

During the six years of ABV existence, the contest has been developed each year with the leadership of Tran Quang Hung (Aquatichung), who manages the judges and organization committee for the contest.

ABV invites Vietnamese aquascapers from all over the world to participate in the Aquadesign Contest. The entry form and official rules are published several months beforehand to allow aquascapers to develop their best aquascapes to present to the panel of judges.

The winner of the competition receives a Trophy Award and \$300 (USD) prize. Some winners may receive aquarium supplies as prizes through local aquarium stores and their donations. However, the best prize of all is “priceless”. The winners and participants of the competition achieve bragging rights and increased reputation among the local aquascaping community.

To be ranked among the TOP 3 or even the TOP 50 is highly honored and a significant achievement for aquascapers.



"Memory" by Haicu (5th Place)



"Seven Deity Wind" by Desperator (6th Place)

The AVB contest is evaluated by an esteemed panel of aquascapers who have had international success in aquascaping competitions such as the Aqua Design Amano International Aquatic Plant Layout Completion (ADA IAPLC) and the Aquatic Gardeners Association Contest (AGA).

This year accomplished Vietnamese Aquascaper Ngo Truong Thinh sat on the panel alongside other aquascapers such as Sylvain van Waerebeke, Uttoshi Guillermin, Diego Sandoval, Bjorn Hoorelbeke, and Luis Navarro.

The AVB judges look for creative and unique aquascapes, that employ a good use of materials and planting skills which ultimately bring a sense of Asian Culture in their layouts. Balance, harmony, depth and attention to detail are among the criteria used to evaluate the aquascapes.

This year's contest held some of the best aquascapes the contest has ever seen. Each year the quality of entries gets better and better due to aquascapers finding new ways to develop a new style and a fresh aquascaping perspective. Some of the top aquascapes included rich colors, highly defined visual lines (through plant trimmings) and efficient use of depth and space. When compared to other countries aquascapes, Vietnamese aquascapes often include specific features native to the land of Vietnam. From rocks, driftwood, stones, and even plants, Vietnamese aquascapers use the locally available resources in their aquascapes to bring a personal meaning to their layouts.

In addition, the aquascapes featured in this competition make the best use of photography and painting rules (Golden Rule) to provide the most optimal visual

layout in terms of depth and space. When these rules are combined with the personal touch, Vietnamese aquascapes become much more than a visually designed layout. These layouts become homage to country and represent the level of aquascaping Vietnam has to offer to the world.

In the past three IAPLC, Vietnam has slowly risen among the ranks of international recognition. Vietnamese aquascapers have been honored with a number of honorable rankings and TOP 3 rankings including Bronze Prize 2008, Grand Prize 2009 and Silver Prize 2010. Some of these winning layouts feature and use Vietnamese materials such as rocks, stones, and driftwood.

In Vietnam, the aquascaping hobby has fluctuated a lot with many ups and downs, in terms of planted aquarium supplies and interest. The future of planted



"Stone Garden" by BanhBeo (8th Place)



"The Sounds of Silence" by DangThanh (9th Place)



"Nature" by Ducvtv (10th Place)

aquariums and aquascaping in Vietnam remains bright as evident in the many young members who have joined the ABV forums in recent years.

The aquatic shops and stores located in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi are highly supportive of planted aquaria, and they continue to provide hobbyists with access to an abundance of aquarium plants and materials. In addition, many hobbyists continue to explore the local mountainous areas and

waterways for aquatic plants and experiment with them in the aquarium.

One of the most important goals of the ABV forums is to help new aquascapers improve their planted aquarium design skills and to maintain our success in the international contests.

The next Aquadesign Contest will be scheduled in mid 2011. While the competition is mainly financially supported through our membership, as AVB gains additional sponsorship

support from aquarium companies and local stores, the contest is surely to expand across the region.

In the next contest, the AVB administration team expects an increase number of participants, more innovative aquascapes, and more aquascapes that capture the intricate beauty of nature. 🌿



Wakening

Dimensions: 125x60x50 cm

Volume: 375 liters

Light: fluorescent 6x40W Jebo 10.000K

CO₂: Pressurized CO₂

Author: Solid

Comment: Tank describes a mountain chain in the early morning. Living beings just have waken up after a long sleep with the new fresh day, full of power. This tank also marks my return to planted tank with many changes in the manner of presentation and idea expression.

Grand Prize

Plant List

Hemianthus callitrichoides

Marsilea hirsute

Hemianthus micranthemoides

Glossostigma elatinoides

Eleocharis acicularis

Vesicularia montagnei

Fauna

Paracheiroidon axelrod

Otocinclus



Shangri—La

Dimensions: 106x61x48 cm

Volume: 310 liters

Light: fluorescent 6x39W

CO₂: Pressurized CO₂

Author: Vietlam

Comment: Shangri-La is a legendary valley leading from the Lama Religion monastery deep in the west end of the Kunlun Mountains. Shangri-La paradise on earth where the trees live on this land is always green, things seem to live immortality and the happiness became permanently...

Silver Prize

Plant List

Eleocharis acicularis
Eleocharis quadricostatus
Marsilea drummondii
Hemianthus callitrichoides
Utricularia graminifolia
Glossostigma elatinoides
Hygrophila sp.
Weeping Moss

Fauna

Paracheirodon innesi



Changing Season Time

Bronze Prize

Dimensions: 108X50X48 cm

Volume: 259 liters

Light: fluorescent 4x39W Aqua Japan 10.000k

CO₂: Pressurized CO₂

Author: Coi77

Comment: During the business trip to the Northwest in the last spring, the picture of rice terraced fields intermixed in the limestone mountains and the immense imposing rock fields remained always in my mind. From that idea, I used plants to combine with the Iwagumi arrangement to create "Changing Season Time."

Plant List

Eleocharis acicularis
Eleocharis quadricostatus
Glossostigma elatinoides
Marsilea drummondii

Fauna

Paracheiroidon innesi



Think Again

4th Place

Dimensions: 80x30x40 cm

Volume: 96 liters

Light: fluorescent 3x30W Atman 10.000K

CO₂: Pressurized CO₂

Author: VKN

Comment: The green immense windy, sunny plains, chain of haughty limestone mountains layers upon layers, premature rich rice fields are curving well – groomed.

Somewhere in the sky, bird herds are spanning wings into the high cloud...all that pictures make the Northern people of the letter S country be homesick with an overfill feeling and also make a unforgettable memory to visitors even only one time...All the splendid things are created by preeminent people? Oh no!

Mother Nature has given to us a lot of precious things, but it's so sad that we had been destroying everything. Please thing again and take action before it become to late cause there are precious things we can only recognize when it slip out of out hands.

Do you want our descendants to be able to play on the green grass carpet, breath the pure immense atmosphere and let the soul fly with non stop bird's wings in the sky? Or they will learn about mountains by the stories of ancestors, by pictures and video tapes?

Please thing again!

Plant List

Hottonia palustris
Glossotigma elatinoides
Eleocharis acicularis
Fissiden fontanus
Peacock moss
Marsilea hirsutais

Fauna

Pristella maxillaris 'Golden'

A Beginner's Perspective

Learning to become an accomplished aquascaper is a process; one of experimentation, successes and failures.





Aquascaping has captured the eyes and imaginations of many. From the moment I saw pictures of various aquascapes I knew I wanted to create something like what I had seen. So began my journey into the hobby that has since reawakened my passion for art and nature. In the series of articles for the *AquaScaping World Magazine* my column will focus on my journey as a budding planted aquarium enthusiast to an aspiring Aquascaper.

First, I will share a little about myself to help you understand what brought me to this hobby and how I discovered aquascaping. I have always been fascinated by nature and as a child would often catch any living creature I could find and attempt to recreate its natural world. Often times this would lead me to ponds, lakes, and streams. As I grew older I began keeping aquariums. I'm sure many can relate to the feeling of walking into the local fish store as a kid. If you are in this hobby it is an experience many of us have in common. For years I kept various tanks filled with the typical fish: swords, tetras, bettas, plecos, and at one point three large Oscars. These tanks also had the typical decorations: tacky plastic plants, fake logs, and even a skeleton sailor who drank rum when the bubbles filled his jar.

One day I found myself bored with the same decorations and travelled to the local fish store to see what new items I

could find. While there I began looking at the few live aquarium plants and decided to purchase them. I eagerly planted these into my tank and sat back to admire my work. I liked what I saw, but my admiration turned sour after several days when I discovered my fish acting strangely. My angels were gasping at the surface and others showed signs of stress. Soon I began to experience losses. The tank that had been stable for a couple years was no longer in equilibrium. I tried many things to regain stability but with no luck. I decided to transfer the remaining fish to an old 20 gallon tank and start from scratch with the 37 gallon aquarium. I now suspect that through planting I may have stirred up anaerobic pockets within the gravel substrate leading to oxygen deprivation, stress, and disease. This mishap was a blessing in disguise.

While searching the internet for what may have gone wrong as well as ideas for what to do with my tank I stumbled across pictures of the most amazing planted aquariums. I wanted to create something similar inside of my aquarium.

My first problem was where to begin. All I had were pictures, great for inspiration, but not helpful in more practical matters, such as equipment, plants, and the overall process. I continued to peruse the internet searching for information. I looked at ADA contest websites and found specifications regarding equipment used in each particular aquascape, some of

By Shawn McBride





A typical high tech planted aquarium with pressurized CO2, canister filter, and bubble counter.

which I had never heard. Carbon dioxide injected into an aquarium? What? Plants named by genus species, all of which I did not know. Lighting equipment, flow and filtration specifications all puzzled me.

I knew I had to learn more, so I dove into reading, reading, and reading some more. Absorbing as much information as possible is my first suggestion to those beginning. This also comes with a word of caution.

There is a lot of misinformation to be found. An example of me falling into the misinformation product traps was

latching onto the concept of substrate heating cables. I went as far as purchasing a cheaper set of them only to discover through various reliable sources that the concept of heating cables is bunk. Plants roots do as good of a job, if not a better job, at transporting oxygen through the substrate. Anyone want to buy some substrate heating cables?

There are many products out there intended to make money off of the naïve or misinformed, beware of snake oil. One should always be a critical thinker and this skill is helpful as a beginning aquascaper.

Upon finding *Aquascaping World* I knew I had come across a home to many experienced aquascapers who were willing to share their knowledge and experience. I read every issue of the *Aquascaping World Magazine*, I browsed the forums, ingesting as much information as possible. I found various members and moderators who were knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful. Jur4ik (Juri) was always there to answer a question and I owe him a lot of credit for what I have learned.

My second piece of advice is to use the forum! I posted every question as I formulated a plan for my tank. I posted a chemical analysis of some substrate, I made many posts about equipment, plants, critiques of hardscape, hardscape materials, and the list goes on. Most members can relate to what a beginner goes through as they, too, were once a novice. Hopefully what you have learned will aid you in sorting good information from the misinformation or, worse yet, the dogma that can sometimes plaque advice given with good intentions.

Another member whose information is useful is Tom Barr, a respected aquascaper with a background in plant biology. He operates a site called The Barr Report. This site was extremely helpful as well, but is not as beginner friendly as *Aquascaping World* due only to the extensive amounts of more “technical” information. Articles are research based and the information is based in practice and sound experimentation, which leads to definitive answers and methods regarding aquatic plant care. This fact is important because the findings can be generalized to more than one particular tank where someone found success with a particular method.

As I learned more I began to realize that my dreams of a stunning aquascape were not a realistic goal for a beginner. A high tech tank with loads of lighting, injected CO2, and demanding plants just wasn't feasible.

Many of the aquascapers whose aquarium layouts I had admired had years of experience and practical know-how. These were not the first scapes they had ever created. These people had learned how the plants grew, how to care for them, special requirements, trimming techniques, methods for combating algae, among many other nuances that come along with experience. No matter how much I read I could not gain experience through it.

There are, however, the few rare examples of people who have found exceptional success as beginners due to their artistic backgrounds in areas that translate well to aquascaping, such as art, photography, design, and horticulture just to name a few. One such aquascaper is US/Japanese aquascaper Steven Chong whose natural artistic eye and talent allows him to create the most spectacular, natural and balanced aquascapes even in his early years as an aspiring aquascaper.

Aquascaping has worked in reverse for me. Recently I went on a vacation and found myself viewing photographs with a critical artistic eye; the way I would analysis an aquascape.



My 37 Gallon practice high tech aquascape.



My practice tank allows me to learn the basics of growing aquatic plants.

Where are the focal points? Is this interesting to look at? It has made me a more critical casual photographer (I'm using "photographer" loosely as I am just a guy with a camera).

For most of us, learning to become an accomplished aquascaper is a process, one of experimentation, of successes and failures. How long the process takes depends upon one's goals, background, and experience in aquarium keeping.

A low tech tank with less demanding plants may be better suited for someone with limited experience, whereas the high tech tank can require more care and leave less room for mistakes, which in turn would require more experience for success.

My suggestion is to start out slowly and expect bumps in the road. View setbacks as a learning experience and one more step closer to that masterpiece. When learning to drive a car one doesn't start on the Audubon with a high performance machine. You must walk before you can run, in a sense. Our enthusiasm as beginners can prove a difficult beast to tame; I still wanted that

stunning tank.

In future articles I will share my experiences as a 'beginning planted aquarium hobbyist' with my 20 gallon tank, which I refer to as my "practice" tank. With this tank came the many struggles and questions of a beginner. How to introduce CO2 into the aquarium, what substrate to use, how much flow and filtration is needed, what fertilizing routine works for me, why aren't the plants growing well and of course what to do with all this algae?

I will also discuss the development of my first high tech scape and how the elements of design became a focal point (pun intended) of its development. I hope that by sharing my journey into the aquascaping and planted aquarium world you can learn from my experiences and become a better aquascaper with me. 🌊

Aquascape In Focus

The World Before Columbus





The World Before Columbus is an impressive aquascape from Italy's Pasquale Buonpane. This layout achieved high rankings in the International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest 2010 and is yet another one of the great masterpieces designed by Buonpane. Curious to know what the title of his aquascape means?

We were too, so we asked him in this issue's Aquascape in Focus Interview.



An Interview with Pasquale Buonpane



Italian Pasquale Buonpane in front on one of his many aquascapes.

Q: Pasquale, what inspired this aquascape?

A: When I started working at the hardscape I did not have a clear inspiration. I just wanted to make something that was different from my previous aquascapes.

To do that, I decided to use these strange flat sedimentary rocks. I began in mid-March and the hardscape came together very quickly. In about two hours, the whole layout was complete in its initial planting and layout arrangement.

In the following days thereafter, I had no changes (unlike what generally happens with all my tanks).

As I observed the

hardscape, I noticed that the main stone reminded me of the great rock you can see near the ancient city of Cuzco in Peru. The entire composition reminded me of a Mayan Pyramid. That is why I choose the title "The World before Columbus".

Q: What types of rocks are you using and arrangement purpose?

A: I used sedimentary limestone rocks that I personally collected on a lake shore. Because of their layered structure, I thought that the best way to get a natural effect was to place them in parallel horizontal lines. Later, I could break the monotony of lines using moss.

Q: What is growing on the rocks, moss? How did you secure and maintain it?

A: The rock horizontal surfaces were covered with small bushes of *Vesicularia ferrieri* (Weeping moss) and *Riccia sp.* "dwarf".

Both species were tied to small flat stones with fishing line. I never use scissors to prune moss and *Riccia* because then it becomes difficult to eliminate all the small pieces from the tank. As these plants grow to a large bush and start to break away from the stones I only divide them and tie them down again.

Q: What plant is used for your ground covering and how did you maintain it?



Sedimentary limestone rocks formed the base of "The World Before Columbus". The horizontal lines and tight formation of the rocks inspired the title of this aquascape for its similarity to Mayan Pyramids and ancient undiscovered cities.

A: In the foreground I used *Hemianthus callitrichoides*.

I usually plant it in small clumps of 5-6 stems at a distance of 3-4 cm. It is a big job and it takes a lot of time, especially in large tanks, but it is surely the best way to get a compact and uniform lawn.

The hardest part was covering the sloping sides of the foreground with *H. callitrichoides*. In first few weeks of the layout, I made water changes very carefully to prevent the collapse of the substrate.

Q: Describe the trimming or your maintenance techniques?

A: I think that to be successful with *H. callitrichoides* is very important to prune it frequently and the best way to do this is using long scissors with curve tips. Usually I make sure that the lawn never exceeds the thickness of 1 cm. In this tank I paid much attention to areas where *H. callitrichoides* touched the moss. I checked these areas frequently to avoid the two species mixing with each other.

Q: Describe the planting techniques for some of the other plants in the layout.

A: As I mentioned before, I prefer to never use the scissors with moss or Riccia. I wanted the clumps of moss hanging from the rocks, so I choose *Vesicularia ferrieri* for it's "weeping" habit. I used *Riccia sp.* "dwarf" to create contrast with the dark green of mosses and simultaneously recall the light green of the lawn.

Additionally, I tied the moss to small flat stones and placed them on the rocks. This technique allows you to move the bushes from one place to another whenever you want.

Q: What are you using for your substrate?

A: For the substrate material, I used Akadama. I added some fertilizing capsules only in the areas covered with *H. callitrichoides*.

In the foreground the depth is about 6-7 cm while in the backside it reaches up to 30 cm. To maintain the difference in level I placed two boxes made of polystyrene under the stones; one for each group of rocks.



Moss and Riccia filled the gaps between the rocks and the *Hemianthus callitrichoides* foreground to create a uniform, balanced layout.



The World Before Columbus

Dimensions: 160x52x60 cm

Volume: 500 liters

Light: 4x58w T8(6.500°K

Substrate: Akadama and Sand

C0₂: Pressurized C0₂

Plant List

Hemianthus callitrichoides

Vesicularia ferrieri

Fissidens fontanus

Fauna

Paracheirodon innesi

Otocinclus sp.

Crossocheilus siamensis

Caridina japonica

Neocaridina "Red Cherry"



A previous aquascape titled "East and West" reached 22nd position in the IAPLC 2009.

Q: How often do you do regular tank maintenance?

A: Every week I change about the 40% of water and after water changes I add liquid fertilizers too. Generally, I prune *Hemianthus callitrichoides* every two weeks to keep it from growing to thick and intermixing with the moss species.

Q: Did or do you have any algae problems?

A: Not at all. In all of my tanks, as soon as the water parameters are suitable, I add a good number of algae eaters such as *Crossocheilus siamensis*, *Otocinclus*, and *Caridina japonica*. I consider these species almost indispensable. If you put them in at the right time this cleanup crew can completely eliminate all the algae problems from the start.

Q: What is your favorite part of your aquascape?

A: I really like the "canyon" between the two groups of rocks. I think it gives a good sense of depth to the tank.

Q: What was the most difficult task for this aquascape?

A: Probably the greatest challenge was to give a natural look to the rocks I used. If you look at the hardscape it looks like a building made of bricks. Using moss I tried to hide the gaps between one rock and the other, so that each group of rock seemed like a single large rock.

Q: Where did you place in the IAPLC 2010?

A: The "World Before Columbus" ranked 106th in IAPLC 2010. Last year my previous tank "East and West" reached 22nd position, so initially I was a bit disappointed with the 2010 result. Then considering the large number of participants of the 10th edition of the competition (more than 1800 entries), I realized that the 106th position was still a good result. After all, there were about 1700 participants who obtained a worse result than me.

Q: What would you change to this aquascape to make it rank higher?

A: Honestly, I never think about the contests while I'm creating my planted aquarium layouts. It would be like imprisoning my creativity and my aesthetic sense in a cage. Certainly if I had more time I could take care of more details, but I think I would not change anything. 🌍

ADA's International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest 2010



Rank #275: Jordi Peligri from Spain



10th Annual Competition!
Over 55 Countries!
Over 1,800 Entries!



Earlier in the Fall 2010, the Aqua Design Amano (ADA) company released the results of its International Aquatic Plant Layout Contest (IAPLC) 2010 results. The IAPLC is the largest planted aquarium aquascaping contest in the world and is traditionally known for setting the creativity bar for aquascapers.


Aquascapers spend upwards to a year or more preparing their aquascapes for the competition. This competition requires aquascapers to keep their layouts unpublished and hidden from the world. Therefore, once the competition results come in, it is often the first time we ever see any of these aquascapes published online. It's certainly worth the wait.

Name: Mont-Ral
Volume (liters): 38
Age: 1 year
Size: 45x28x30
Plants: *Glossostigma elatinoides*
Lilaeopsis brasiliensis,
Staurogyne sp.
Rotala rotundifolia
Eleocharis vivipara
Taxiphyllum alternans (Taiwan moss)
Riccardia Chamedryfolia
Light: 1 pll 36w 865
Fish & invertebrates: *Neocaridina heteropoda* var "yellow"
Planorbis corneus
Rasbora Galaxy
Fertilizer: KNO₃ 1 mg/l day
K₂PO₄ 0.2 mg/l day
KSO₄ 1.5 mg/l day




Rank #631: Albert Escrihuela Cáceres from Spain 

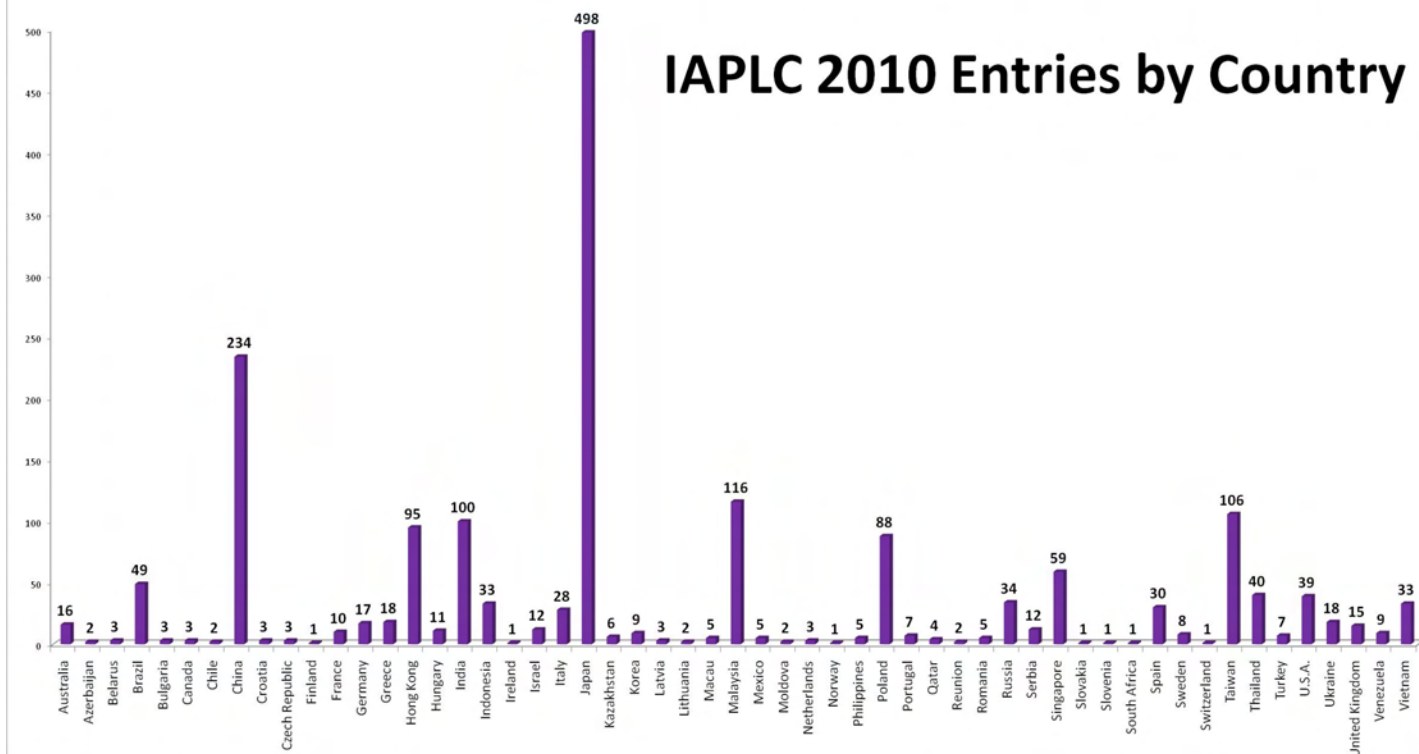


Rank #106: Pasquale Buonpane from Italy 



Rank #242 Sergiusz Kowalew from Poland 

IAPLC 2010 Entries by Country



This year marks the 10th anniversary of the competition. With the growing popularity of aquascaping around the world, the IAPLC received over 1,800 entries from over 55 countries, a new record high for the contest.

Now you may be wondering what's the draw for aquascapers participating in this competition? Well ADA offers its Grand Winner 1,000,000 Japanese Yen, (approximately \$10,000 USD). Yet besides that, ADA provides aquascapers to gain recognition for their works of art. For most aquascapers, this competition offers them a chance to see where they rank among thousands around the world. Each year when the results are released there is a buzz in the forum communities, like AquaScaping World, where members proudly showcase their aquascapes and their final results.

To be among the TOP 10, 100, or even 1000 is a high honor for many aquascapers.

In the 2010 IAPLC, this year we saw many of the TOP aquascapes mimicking "mountain scapes" and executing highly intricate variations of the "Nature Aquarium Style". These aquascapes featured moss covered driftwood or a rock hardscape shooting outwards into all depths of the aquarium naturally and majestically.

The Grand Prize winner, Pavel Bautin from Russia created an aquascape reminiscent of view from the middle of a woody forest during Spring. Tall towering trunks sprouting from a field of *Glossostigma elatinoides* were strategically placed to provide an endless sense of depth and vastness.

On the AquaScaping World Forums, you can see aquascapes posted from the international

community and their rankings. ADA will be producing a competition book that is available for purchase, with most of the entered aquascapes.

The top aquascapers in the competition will be recognized at the Nature Aquarium Party held in Niigata at ADA's headquarters this October. It is a perfect ending to a outstanding class of aquascapes that were produced this year.

For the full list of winners visit the ADA website (<http://en.iaplc.com>) and browse the AquaScaping World forums for a look at some of the aquascapes entered into this year's contest. 🌐

References:

Photos credit to respective authors
<http://en.iaplc.com>



yai lapra

Rank #513: Kim Pulkki from Sweden



Tank Size: 120x60x50 cm

Volume: 360 liters

Lighting: DIY aluminum tub with Hagen GLO starter units, 6 x T5 54W philips aquarelle and deluxe 965 pro fluorescent lamps.

Photoperiod: 11h/day

CO₂ Injection: 10kg pressurized system with a pH-controller and a reactor driven by a Eheim 2252.

Substrate: Akadama DL and Swedish Råda sand.

Fertilization: MDD (KNO₃, KH₂PO₄, K₂SO₄ & Micro+ ProFe)

Plants: *Bolbitis heudelotii*, *Microsorium pteropus* -narrow & -needle, *Echinodorus tenellus*, *Hemianthus micranthemoides*, *Ranunculus inundates*, *Glossostigma elatinoides*



Rank #544: Stu Worall from United Kingdom 

Tank Size: 90x45x45cm

Substrate: Tropica Aquacare substrate, Tropica Aquacare capsules, ADA Amazonia Aquasoil topped with powder.

Hardscape: Rock quarried from the Llyn Peninsula

CO₂ Injection: DAZS Bubble Counter, HK Diffuser, ADA Grey Parts Set

Lighting: 4x24w T5 Luminaire

Custom Stainless Steel Light Hanger.

Plants: Hemanthus Callitriche, *Eleocharis parvula*, *Echinodorus tenellus*



Day at the Beach

By Tony "TYB" Borgebäck

Tank Size: 125 x 50 x 50 cm (49 x 20 x 20 inches)

Volume: 312 l (82,4 usGal)

Lighting: Two (2) x Hagen Glo T5HO with 2 x 54W (2 x Life-GLO - 6700K and 2 x Power-GLO - 18,000K)

Photoperiod: 8h/day (Digital timer).

Hardscape: Redmoor roots and local rocks.

Substrate: DIY (Bauhaus) Gardol Torvmull naturell Sphagnum - 50% (Blomsterlandet) AqualInterior

Näckroslera - 25% (Jula) Blästersand - 25%

Filtration: JBL CristalProfi e1500 - spray bar

Fertilizers: Reg. (AquaMagic) EX Fireextingusher 6 liter (Kalmar Brandservice). 2-3 bubblor/s, Aqua Medic Reactor; the JBL CristalProfi e1500, Tropica capsules in the substrate and PMDD (EI).

“My first real aquascape setup in August 2009 and it turned in to a IAPLC entry 2010. This was nice for my first try. I was ranked best among all the Swedes! It is not the most advanced aquascape, but it is a start. I hope I have many more to come.”



Rank #455



Plant List

Lilaeopsis brasiliensis
Eleocharis acicularis
Blyxa japonica
Pogostemon helferi
Taxiphyllum barbieri
Aponogeton crispus"hybrid"
Cryptocoryne crispatula var. *Balansae*
Microsorium pteropus
 Vall. *Nana*
Anubias barteri var *barteri*,
Glossostigma elatinoides
Echinodorus quadricostatus,
Hemianthus micranthemoides

Fauna

Crossocheilus oblongus "siamensis"
Otocinclus affinis
Pterophyllum scalare "Orinoco"F1
Paracheirodon innesi
 Crystal red shrimp
Neocaridina denticulata sinensis "red"
Apistogramma agassizii "Red Tail"



Art and Creation

ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery



“Upon entry, each aquarium beckons with majestic allure, each one imbued with its own kami, each one a living, breathing work of art.”

By BJ Ruttenberg

It's August 2010, Japan's hottest summer on record, I'm sitting in a train car, no A/C, sweat rolling through every crevice of my body, and I have a destination but no direction. I think this is the right train...though it was my girlfriend, Doren, who at the train station screamed, “THIS IS IT!” and pushed me on without hesitation. The train took off.

Dor and I are now rummaging through every map, every scribbled-on scrap of paper and every direction we have written down, trying to find the right train stop. The train keeps rolling through the Niigata countryside, getting ever closer to, or further from, our destination.

A Japanese gentleman in the seat to my left sees our frantic rummaging and, like every other Japanese person we have encountered on this trip, heroically comes to our rescue, “where are you trying to go?” “The ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery,” I respond hopefully, almost inquisitively.

A pause and a smile. “Ah, Mr. Amano,” he says, “I have met Mr. Amano. He lives near me.” I brighten. “Really?”





Peering through one of the ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery's Aquascapes.

“He is a very famous man in Japan,” the man says and proceeds to tell me of Mr. Amano’s presentation of the Primitive Cedar Tree in Sado to the G8 Working Lunch held in 2008 in Hokkaido, Japan.

“When did you meet him?” I ask. “He came to visit my winery two years ago,” he said, and pulls out a local magazine, opening it to the first page. “This is Mr. Amano,” he points to a small picture of Mr. Amano surrounded by gorgeous photographs of the Sado coastline. He then flips the page and points to a picture of a man standing inside a wine cellar, “and this is me. You can have the magazine, they are free,” he hands it to me. “Anyway, you should get off at Maki.”

All I can do is stare pop-eyed and belch a “Thank You!”

The man, Mr. Takashi Honda, owner of the Fermier winery, got off at the next stop leaving Dor and I to again marvel at the incredible kindness of strangers.

Having properly disembarked from the train at Maki we decide to grab a cab to avoid the absurd heat. I climb into the cab and the cabbie turns toward me as if asking, “where to?” I oblige, “ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery?” He stares back at me like I’m speaking another language (oh, wait!). I then point to what I believe to be the Japanese translation.

“Ah, sakanaya,” Japanese for “fish store.”

“Hai!” I respond, and we’re off.

The view from the cab is rice fields and industrial warehouses. After five minutes of driving Dor

taps my shoulder, “did you see that modern-looking building?”

“No,” I say, and the cabbie takes a hair-raising right turn.

“I think that’s where we’re headed,” she says and a slight shiver begins to build at the base of my neck.

When I decided to travel to Japan, the decision was initially based on little more than my unrequited desire to see the ADA Nature Aquarium Gallery and Sensei Amano’s work first hand. I of course found other reasons but the ADA NA Gallery remained paramount.

Now, as we pull up to the front entrance, all the world is swept away and in its place sits a present, gift-wrapped in concrete, glass and steel. I honestly don’t remember how many yen I threw at the cab driver, only the feeling as I strode through the swinging-



This Classic Amano layout is the first aquascape I encounter as I walked through the ADA Gallery.

glass front doors to be greeted by an eight-foot wide artisanal masterpiece. Like St. Peter at the gates of heaven, it welcomed me with open arms.

Impressions

The wall adjacent to the Nature Aquarium Gallery entrance is inset with a nature aquarium of breathtaking elegance.

It is a classic “V” shaped layout comprised of massive and beautifully smooth Hakkai stone and a maddening array of aquatic plants including *Glossostigma elatinoides*, *Sagittaria subulata*, *Cryptocoryne crispatula* var. *balansae*, *Valasernia americana*, and *Aponogeton madagascariensis*, among others.

This masterful work serves as an eloquent and fitting frame for the myriad Amano styled nature aquariums that can be viewed through the negative space of the valley layout.

The entryway to the ADA building leads around a corner to a hallway, which stretches the entire length of the ADA building and out into a courtyard. The right wall of this hallway is of floor to ceiling glass and on the other side, the Nature Aquarium Gallery.

Upon entry, each aquarium beckons with majestic allure, each one imbued with its own kami, each one a living, breathing work of art. Surprising still is the complete lack of any auditory disturbance once inside. Where some would see fit to supplement the public’s viewing experience with music or ambient nature noise, here, only the subtle babble of water can be divined among the background of silence.

The first of the nature aquaria I encounter is emblematic of the style that Mr. Amano is so well known for. A verdant, grass-like, foreground carpet of bright green *Lilaeopsis*

brasiliensis contrasts with the center weighted mid-ground forest of reddish-brown *cryptocoryne wendtii*, *microsorium pteropus* v. narrow leaf, and *Bolbitis heudelotii*.

Rising from this mélange of mid-ground plants, the arms of a single piece of driftwood divide out of the center, branching across both sides of the layout, sheltering the underlying growth, each arm of wood covered in a fuzz of well-manicured moss.

I move down the row of aquaria, studying each in admiration and amazement. The first row of aquaria is arranged along the shared glass wall and leads toward two black wooden tables at the back of the gallery, which are strewn with “Amano” paraphernalia. To the left of the tables stands an emerald landscape of wabikusa style aquascapes.

However, the most striking of the surrounding display is on the opposite side of the tables.



Among the many aquascapes, this “alien” aquascape caught my eye for its unique black stones reminiscent of the Sado coastline.

Truly unlike any nature aquarium I have seen before, this alien landscape can best be compared to those magazine images of the Sado coastline. The black stones in this scape grow preternaturally out of the white sand substrate like monolithic basalt islands. Each stone is covered, from base to tip, in moss and the spaces in-between are accented with *Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides*, and *Riccia fluitans*. The backdrop of the composition is further accented with twining strands of *Eleocharis* sp. The tank is populated with a prodigious cloud of cardinal tetras, in addition to the token *Caridinia japonica*, making this nature aquarium a picture of unique inspiration.

It bears mentioning that an equally striking sight is the awe-inspiring array of cameras and equipment stored in the back of the gallery, next to the photography backdrop ostensibly used for shooting aquaria. Everything from large-format bellows style cameras to lights and tripods are stored in cabinets and on shelves.

Having made my way to the back of the Nature Aquarium Gallery, I ask to use the bathroom. As I head down the outside hall and behind the Nature Aquarium Gallery, just before I arrive at the bathroom, I find a collection of stainless steel industrial refrigerators.

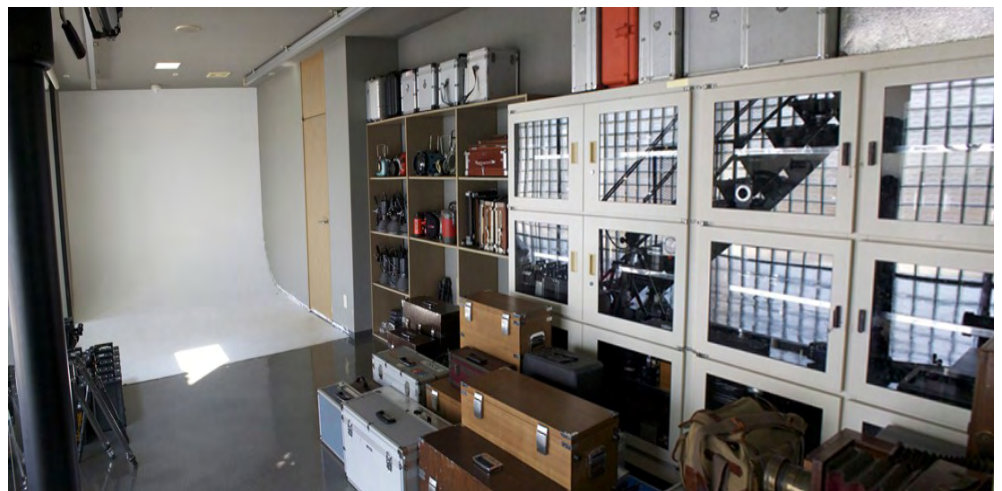
“What could he possibly keep in there?”

My interest piqued, I quietly open the door to a fridge crammed full of large format Fujifilm. “Takashi Amano shoots film!” I suppose part of me should understand this intuitively from the fact that the man uses large format cameras almost exclusively for his major landscapes, but it nevertheless surprises me to no end.

I continue to peruse the remaining aquaria. Two tanks in particular strike me as uniquely appealing. Juxtaposed next to one another, one a “hill” style layout and the other a “wedge” style, the two form a unique complement.

The “hill” styled aquarium caught my attention initially because of the steep grade of the

Amano’s Photography area filled with cameras, film, studio lighting, and backdrops.





Two aquascapes, the “Hill” and “Wedge” layouts are positioned together to create a jarring contrast yet provides a unique complement to one another.

substrate slope and the well-manicured foreground of *Glossostigma elatinoides*. The closely cropped foreground lawn has yellowed in parts, lending (in my opinion) a more natural feel to this layout.

Additionally, the plant arrangement is unquestionably novel because it utilizes larger plants in the foreground that are traditionally placed in the background. A large foreground tuft of *Eleocharis* sp. has in some places grown to the entire height of the tank, and *Bolbitis* are attached intermittently to two pieces of driftwood placed in the front corners of the tank.

The “wedge” style layout is similarly eye catching, but because of the complementing shapes of the *Glossostigma elatinoides* foreground and the *Anubias nana v. petite*

background. Adding to the visual complexity of this layout is a piece of knotty, branching root-wood that stretches from the top rear of the tank to the opposite foreground corner at the bottom of the aquarium. The root-wood almost elicits images of a Floridian mangrove but for the dark stone used in the background, which impresses a more temperate climate on the scape.

Having made my final rounds through the Nature Aquarium Gallery I call a cab and take a few final mental notes. After Dor and I move out to the ADA lobby entrance, I snap a few more pictures and wait for the cab to arrive.

Amid all the beauty and novelty and natural wonder, my one realization was that each and every work in the ADA Nature

Aquarium Gallery is born of collaboration – collaboration of man and nature, absence and presence, mind and body, spirit and soul – and no greater lesson could be taken away.

My experience now just a collaboration of memory, I get in the cab and ride silently back to the train station. 🚗



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