

TOP-VIEW VERSUS SIDE-VIEW

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Koi Talk

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By some accounts, there are over three hundred varieties of goldfish. These can be grouped in various ways, usually by tail type, presence/absence of wen, presence/absence of dorsal fin, etc. They can also be grouped based on a whether they were bred to be viewed from the top or viewed from the side.

Originally, all goldfish were kept in shallow ponds, ceramic bowls or other containers and viewed from the top. Considering the thousand-year history of goldfish keeping, the glass aquarium is a relatively new innovation which did not come into use until about 150 years ago. However, being able to easily view goldfish from the side through glass has undoubtedly influenced what characteristics are selected for and impacted the development of new varieties. In some cases, a single variety has developed into two distinct lines (really, separate varieties in their own right) based on whether they are bred to be viewed from the top or viewed from the side. Even though top-view goldfish have a much longer history, most of the fancy goldfish available today are destined for the home aquarium and have been selected to look their best from this vantage point. Here, we will list and briefly describe those goldfish varieties which are often kept in ponds or are intended to be appreciated from the top view.

COMMON GOLDFISH

Common goldfish have the body shape of the ancestral Gibel carp. It has a single caudal (tail) fin which does not spread much more than the depth of the body. The ends of the fin are rounded. The color is typically orange-red but may be silver, black or other color. These are mass produced for bait, feeder fish and inexpensive aquarium or pond pets.

SHUBUNKIN

Similar to common goldfish, but with a calico color pattern. There is a bluish background topped with markings of red, orange, yellow, or brown plus black spots. The best shubunkins are selected for side-view, but many are also kept in ponds

COMET

Comets may be the most popular pond or water garden fish in the United States. By some accounts, it originated in the U.S. They are similar to common goldfish with a long slim body and a single tail. The fins are somewhat pointed. The tail of the best comets is about three-quarters as long as the body and the upper and lower lobe of the tail fin are held open and apart. The most popular colors are solid red, and red and white. The red and white ones are called by their Japanese name, sarasa. In Hong Kong and elsewhere in Asia, the comets with

long tails may be called swallow-tails. Like common goldfish and shubunkins, comets are very hardy and will flourish in water gardens where egg fish and other more highly-bred goldfish varieties do not do well.

WAKIN

Wakin is the common goldfish of Japan. Shubunkins, comets and other single-tail goldfish are actually rare there. Wakin have recently started becoming popular in the U.S. The body is long and slender, but the tail is divided and held horizontally. The tail fin is not long like a comet's, but its horizontal orientation makes it show well when viewed from above. The color is red, white, red and white, or occasionally black. The best wakin have a red and white pattern similar to a kohaku koi. But unlike a kohaku, a wakin may be more appealing if there is some red in the tail. They are judged on body conformation, how well the tail is held horizontally, quality of the shiro (snow white) and beni (deep red), pattern placement and balance. Wakin grow large (10-16 inches) and are very hardy.

JIKIN

Jikin were developed from wakin in Japan and are also called peacock-tail. The tail is completely divided and splayed outward. The body is slightly shorter than a wakin or common goldfish. The body color is a metallic white with red markings. There is a "12-point-rule" where it is desirable to have red on the two anal fins, two pectoral fins, two ventral fins, the two gill plates, the two parts of the caudal fin, dorsal fin and lips. Any other red on a jikin is not desirable. Some jikin are "made" by removing misplaced red scales a few at a time when the fish is young. Young fish which have had scales removed can be delicate and prone to disease although older jikin are fairly hardy. There is also a nacreous calico variety called edojikin. Jikin are rare in the U.S. and good ones are hard to find anywhere and expensive.

TOSAKIN

Tosakin were developed in Japan from ryukin and are rarely found in the West.. While ryukin are difficult to appreciate from the above, tosakin were bred to be a top-view fish. The most outstanding feature is the large undivided double tail which re-curves back toward the head. Tosakin are generally kept in shallow bowls or tanks to help the tail develop and properly display. They are not generally hardy enough to be kept in ponds.

TOP-VIEW RANCHU

There are two distinct types of ranchu; side-view and top-view. The Chinese and most of the rest of the world generally produce and keep side-view fish. The top-view ranchu was developed in Japan and most of the good ones still come from Japan. For side-view fish, the important characteristics are a smooth curve in the back, the acute angle the tail fin forms with the tail tube (peduncle), and the wen (head growth). These characteristics are also important for top-view fish, but of primary concern is a large rectangular head and broad back (when seen from above). The tail should be shaped properly, should fold in as the fish swims, and

then open like a flower when it stops. A good top-view ranchu will swim strongly and effortlessly. Calico is the most popular color for side-view ranchu, but they can be two-color or self-colored (solid) red, orange, black or white. Most good top-view ranchu are solid orange or red, or red/orange and white. Solid white is less desirable and top-view ranchu are never calico. They write books about top-view ranchu and we cannot do them justice in this short article.

TOP-VIEW ORANDA

Oranda are generally a side-view fish but there is some interest in breeding oranda for viewing from the top. A broad veiltail is more desirable than a tin forked tail when viewed from above.