

SUPPLEMENTAL AERATION

idle ramblings of seve hopkins

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Glass goldfish bowls have been around for about 250 years but have only recently fallen out of favor. They are reputed to be death traps for our finned friends. Spherical goldfish bowls were recently outlawed in Rome. One of the many reasons cited for the ban was that it gives the fish a distorted perspective on life. Of course, the main problem with goldfish bowls is the small amount of surface area for oxygen transfer and the small volume for dilution of metabolites. Oxygen depletion is usually the first limiting factor.

In Mid-Eighteenth Century Japan, goldfish bowls were all the rage. Glass blowing had only recently become commonplace and goldfish had become a status symbol when the government banned them along with other luxury items. Small goldfish bowls were especially fashionable with the courtesan set. It was very chic to be seen out and about with your favorite goldfish in hand. I guess they had larger goldfish quarters at home because some of these little purse-like fish bowls were only about eight inches in diameter. In such cramped quarters, the oxygen would be depleted fairly quickly. So, part of the ensemble was a glass rod used to stir the water (sort of like a swizzle stick) to increase oxygen transfer.

A student of aeration technology has to wonder if this was the genesis of supplemental aeration in fish keeping.

