

# ***Aquascape, Inc.***

## ***2009 Media Kit***





## ***A Brief History of Aquascape, Inc.***

From building ponds to house his pet turtles to building ponds to make money over the summer, Greg Wittstock, aka The Pond Guy™, has been dabbling in water gardens since the age of twelve. He began with a concrete creation and evolved to the ecosystem ponds that Aquascape is well know for. Now that you know how Wittstock's love of ponds began, here's how Aquascape has grown and evolved into what it is today.

After experimenting with ponds for over eight years, Wittstock finally had a "light bulb" moment during a drive home from the boring summer job he took during college in 1990. He decided that he wanted to do something he loved for a living ... he wanted to build ponds. Merely 30 second later, he had a company name, Aquascape. The next year, he began building ponds during his breaks in the school year.

The real birth of Aquascape came in 1992, when Wittstock, with 17 ponds under his belt, got a call from a freelance reporter working with the Chicago Tribune. A letter, business card, and photographs sent by Wittstock the year before had paid off and an article was run about Aquascape in the Tempo section. The result of the article was hundreds of phone calls and 82 ponds sales.

From there, Wittstock got involved in many a business venture. While at school, he used architecture students as interns, earning credit hours and resulting in cheap labor. He finished his degree in Interpersonal Communications at The Ohio State University and was soon entertained by the idea of franchising his business. After several attempts to work out a deal, Wittstock decided that it wasn't going to pan out and went to work on growing his own business and hiring more employees.

Business was booming and Wittstock decided to begin mailing out catalogs to prospective customers, buying a list of 26,000 names to start out. Soon, Wittstock was leaving the building of ponds to his employees and concentrating on the front office work. More catalogs were being mailed out each year and sales were steadily increasing. Next thing he knew, Wittstock was out on the road, educating contractors about the great profit margins and satisfaction that went with water gardening.

Franchising may not have worked for Wittstock, but signing on a group of distributors was turning Aquascape into a company with many different locations to buy product from. Distributors became the local pond dealer, selling to contractors as a mini-Aquascape, without all the franchise fees. Seminar tours continued, with distributors beginning to lend a hand and before Wittstock knew it, his distributors

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comprised much of the business ... a great future was ahead! In 2002, the Certified Aquascape Contractor program was formed, providing marketing opportunities to the best of the best contractors and connecting them with potential pond owners.

In 2003, Aquascape took the plunge into retailing by purchasing Water Creations, changing all of the branding to the NurseryPro name. Now the ecosystem pond would be available to do-it-yourselfers, thus bringing a whole new customer base on board.

The Water Garden Excellence Program was created in 2005, teaming contractors and retailers up to train and educate each other and their customers about water gardens. The program includes marketing materials and seminars that aid the contractors and retailers in promoting water gardening and educating potential and current pond owners. The program caught on like wildfire and has proved successful for everyone involved.

At the end of 2005, Wittstock's dream of a workplace utopia came true as the company moved to Aqualand. Aqualand is a 256,000 square foot office and warehouse facility that will boast the largest sloping green roof in North America. From the modest beginnings of \$48,000 in pond sales in 1992 to over \$55 million in 2005, Aquascape and The Pond Guy™ have come a long way!



## ***Our Unique Value Proposition***

Aquascape, Inc. is dedicated to helping our customers succeed at building, selling, and retailing water features while supplying innovative products and solutions that capture, clean, and re-use our planet's most vital resource ... water. We accomplish this with quality products, consistently being first to market on new and innovative products and ideas.

One thing that sets us apart from competitors claiming to have comparable products is our training and education. Throughout the year, Aquascape offers hands-on field training and classroom seminars to educate contractors and retailers on every aspect of their businesses – from building and selling to finances and customer relations. Aquascape offers year-round seminars on several of these subjects; Pond College is a week-



long event, packed with informative classes; and Aquascape offers a few seminars tours each year to offer customers opportunities for education closer to home. The competition can't measure up to Aquascape's commitment to make contractors and retailers successful in business and in life.





## **Products and Services**

Aquascape, Inc. succeeds in an increasingly competitive water gardening marketplace by focusing on two of our strengths ... quality products and exceptional service. These two strengths stand out above all as the foundation Aquascape was built on.

### **The Products**

Aquascape, Inc. is a fixture in two markets ... wholesale and retail. The product selection is vast and thorough. We do possess some staple products that have launched us well above and beyond the competition. Here is a sampling of our most successful and innovative products.

- **BioFalls® Filter:** Not only does it create the perfect base for a beautiful waterfall, but it also acts as an effective filter, complete with a non-clogging swirl chamber, allowing for even distribution of the water. Also known as a biological filter.
- **Skimmer:** Houses the pump and draws water and debris from the surface of the pond, effectively stopping it from falling to the bottom and decomposing. Also known as a mechanical filter.
- **11'x16' Mini Pond Kit:** Our best-selling kit comes with everything a contractor or retailer needs to build a pond. Pond kits are a huge part of the Aquascape philosophy, having everything you need, ready to go.
- **Pumps:** Aquascape's selection of pumps are second-to-none. With pumps made specifically for water gardening, the competition finds Aquascape hard to beat.
- **Snorkel™ Vault and Centipede™ Module:** A patented filter system designed to make constructing wetlands a breeze. It can also be used to create Pondless® Waterfalls, gorgeous waterfalls without a full-fledged pond. Also available in a kit.
- **MicroPond™ Kits:** Do-it-yourselfer versions of the professional Mini Pond Kits.
- **MicroPondless™ Kits:** Do-it-yourself versions of the professional Pondless® Waterfall Kits.
- **Fountains** – Aquascape offers a large selection of fountains – different kinds for different applications.
- **Bacteria:** Ecosystems® AquaClearer™ Extreme and S.A.B.™ Extreme help pond owners reduce pond maintenance and keep water clear.
- **Fish Retailing System:** Self-contained units available for retailers who sell fish. Helps prevent the spread of disease, complete with separate biological and mechanical filtration in each unit.

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### ***The Services***

While Aquascape is well known for the strides made in product development and first-to-market innovations, customer loyalty is obtained and maintained by the high levels of services. Here's a glimpse at some of the most important services.

- **Customer Care Department:** A highly-skilled customer service department greets every customers that calls with knowledge on ach of the product. They are continually being trained on new and existing product.
- **Technical Department:** Aquascape provides something unique to the industry, a technical department that specifically answers any technical questions that customer service may not be able to help with in terms of product and installation. The technical department also provides a free service where they will bid out a project with Aquascape products free of charge.
- **Warehouse Fill Rate:** Aquascape's warehouse staff is always busy and just happens to be the best in the industry with a consistent fill rate of over 90%.
- **Marketing Materials:** Aquascape provides customers with the very best in marketing materials, including brochures, books, door hangers, signage, videos, and more.
- **Educational Materials:** Books and videos are available, detailing construction, marketing techniques, and financials.
- **Educational Training Seminars:** Whether traveling around the country to conduct Build-A-Pond Days or staying at Aqualand to offer water feature and business seminars, Aquascape is tops in educational training seminars. Contractors and retailers can also attend Pond College during Pondemonium® or choose from one of the other many seminars offered each year through Aquascape.
- **Programs:** Aquascape offers the most programs in the business. The Certified Aquascape Contractors Program, Water Garden Excellence Program, and Aquascape Rewards Program, to name a few, are all dedicated to the success of Aquascape, Inc.



## **Key Management Profiles**

**Greg Wittstock, Founder and CEO** - Also known as The Pond Guy™, Greg Wittstock is Owner and CEO of Aquascape Inc., the leading player in the rapidly emerging water gardening market. Since its inception in 1991, Aquascape, Inc has experienced incredible growth, appearing on Inc Magazine's list of 500 Fastest-Growing, Privately-Held Companies in North America 4 years in a row (1999-2002). Greg himself appeared on the cover of Inc Magazine, along with a feature article about his leadership and entrepreneurial spirit. In 2004, he was nominated for Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year award. Greg received the Best Bosses award from Fortune's Small Business Magazine and Winning Workplaces in 2005. He also earned University of Chicago's Entrepreneur Hall of Fame award in 2007. True to the company's ecosystem philosophy, Greg created new Aquascape headquarters dubbed "Aqualand," an environmentally friendly workplace utopia. Aqualand received silver level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, and sports the largest sloping green roof in North America. Greg is a highly sought-after motivational speaker, having conducted seminars nationwide for contractors, retailers, and distributors. He authored *The Pond Guy on Marketing*, and his company has produced numerous publications for contractors, retailers, and consumers. Greg has appeared on HGTV and has been quoted in numerous industry publications, including *Lawn & Landscape*, *Today's Garden Center*, *Irrigation & Green Industry News*, *Landscape Management*, *Nursery Retailer*, in addition to several Chicagoland publications.



**Ed Beaulieu, Chief Sustainability Officer** – Ed came to Aquascape in 1993 as a construction laborer, but a little creativity and a positive outlook on life and business helped catapult Ed to the position of Vice President of Field Research, and finally on to his current position as Chief Sustainability Officer. Ed specializes in all aspects of pond design, construction, maintenance, biology, water quality, and filtration for residential and commercial water features. He's passionate about the environment and oversees all sustainable and environmental initiatives at Aquascape. His favorite things about working at Aquascape include the eco-friendly headquarters and the people, as well as being able to do what he loves for a living. His work was featured on the cover of *Architectural Digest*, in *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Nature's Garden*, *Irrigation and Green Industry News*, and more. Ed was project manager for water feature installations at the Flower and Garden Festival at Epcot. Ed installed features for Richard Petty and Jill Rapaport, and has appeared on HGTV and DIY shows. Ed's personal pond is 70'x 35', including several waterfalls, a bog filtration system, and two bridges, complemented by a large flagstone patio.



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**Colleen Heitzler, Chief Operating Officer** – In August of 2001, Aquascape hit the jackpot, acquiring Colleen Heitzler to be the new Controller. It wasn't long before Colleen's knowledge and wealth of experience put her in the Chief Financial Officer position, and a few short years later, she was promoted to Chief Operating Officer. Her life is numbers, from accounting to finance, and she strives to help others understand the financial aspects of their businesses. Colleen values the relationships and camaraderie that exists between employees, customers, and suppliers at Aquascape, and believes that company achieves a great balance of winning attitudes and confidence, along with humility and compassion. Colleen also enjoys relaxing at home next to her Pondless® Waterfall with a 25-foot stream, which was constructed during a 2004 Build-A-Pondless Waterfall Day training events.



**Jeffrey Payton, Executive Vice President, Business Development** – With 15 years of green industry experience, it's no wonder Jeffrey Payton was a great match for Aquascape, Inc. Jeffrey came to Aquascape in 1998 after working at an independent garden center with shrubs and trees, and as a landscape designer, running multiple crews. During his tenure, he held positions including: Technical Services, Customer Service Manager, Vice President of Customer Relations, and General Manager of NurseryPro, before earning his current title of Executive Vice President, Business Development. In his current position, Jeffrey manages the product development/management, customer care, and business development, while putting all potential growth opportunities within the water garden market place into place at Aquascape. The Pondless® Waterfall and 15' stream in his backyard was installed in 2004 during a Build-A-Pond Day training event.



**Michelle Kurschner, Director of Marketing** – Michelle Kurschner is no stranger to marketing because she's worked her way up through the ranks throughout the years, learning everything about marketing from media planning to production management. She was a fitting addition to the Aquascape team, already known as a marketing machine, in 2001. With 10 years of experience in the field, as Marketing Director, she oversees events, seminars, videography, websites, public relations, publishing, creative services, and marketing, of course. One of the things Michelle loves about Aquascape is the team environment that has been created and is always encouraged. Michelle recently had a 13'x16' pond, complete with two waterfalls, built at her home, and is a big fan of her nine koi friends.



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**Dave Kelly, Vice President of Product Development**—Dave joined the early ranks of Aquascape in 1996, with a bachelor's degree in environmental health science from Illinois State University, with an emphasis in constructed wetlands and natural methods for wastewater treatment. Dave is able to apply a wide range of experience and expertise in the areas of water, plants, fish and water ecology. As Vice President of Product Development, Dave is instrumental in translating the product performance information and the research and development from the field into a product improvement and new product development for Aquascape. He's a member of Aquascape's Concept Ideation Team, a group whose purpose is to identify, evaluate and develop new technologies and product opportunities. Dave works closely with Aquascape's product management group, product operations, construction, and sales and marketing to synchronize all efforts to bring to market new and existing product offerings and solutions. Dave is a highly sought after presenter at Pond College and water gardening seminars across the country, and has successfully trained numerous green industry professionals. He co-authored *The Pond Builder's Bible*, *The Pond Retailer's Bible*, *Succeeding & Prospering with Water Features: Volume II*, and *Pond Building for Hobbyists*. Patented products that carry Dave's stamp of expertise include the Constructed Wetland, Pondless® Waterfalls, and the Signature Skimmer. In his spare time, Dave enjoys mountain biking, trail running and gardening. He and wife Maggie have four children: Liam, Moira, and twins Gavin and Quinn.



**Sue Soderberg, Director of Channel and Program Management** – Sue has been with Aquascape since March of 2002, when she started in the position of Distributor Development Specialist. A year after Aquascape acquired Water Creations/NurseryPro, she was promoted to Customer Relations Manager. Now, as director of Channel and Program Management, Sue oversees the Authorized AquascapePRO™ Distributor network, the Water Garden Excellence Program, and the Certified Aquascape Contractor Program. Sue believes that one of the keys to Aquascape's success is the intelligent, passionate work force, whose forward-thinking style is awarded in Aquascape's fast-paced environment. She also credits Aquascape's ability to move and change with industry growth and trends as a huge factor in Aquascape's continued success.



**Ben Cruz, Director of Human Resources** – Ben joined Aquascape, Inc. as head of the accounting department in 1997. He was offered a position as Director of Human Resources, a post which he's held since 1999. Ben leads human resource workshops throughout the year for Aquascape contractors, retailers and distributors. In addition, he is a recurring presenter at Pondemonium®. He received his Professional Human Resources (PHR) certification in 2006. Ben is an advocate for people and is proficient at analyzing personnel issues, providing solutions that are beneficial for both the employer and employee.



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**Roberto Cosme, Director of Warehouse Operations**—The summer of 2001 brought Roberto to the front doors of Aquascape, Inc. when he accepted the position of Director of Warehouse Operations. Roberto schedules all warehouse staffing and training, and oversees the day-to-day operations of both the receiving and shipping areas. He's responsible for order accuracy, productivity levels, and facility maintenance. In addition, Roberto acts as Facilities Manager for Aqualand, the LEED silver-certified corporate headquarters that sports the largest sloping green roof in North America. Roberto played a major role in coordinating the execution of Aqualand's construction. He also assisted in the project management of the company's move to the new location in St. Charles, Illinois. In his spare time, Roberto enjoys vacationing and spending time with wife Shaunta, and his four children: Roberto II, Nicholas, Raven, and Joshua.



**Tony Bryant, Director of Product Operations**—Tony's extensive 15-year background in supply chain management secured his position as Purchasing Supervisor in April of 2003, but he quickly climbed the Aquascape ladder earning the positions of Purchasing Manager, Director of Supply Chain Management, and currently the Director of Product Operations. Tony's skill set has been utilized in the areas of sourcing, forecasting, purchasing, negotiating, problem resolution, and now ensuring quality on all Aquascape products. His background includes time spent with a lighting company that specializes in energy efficient designs, along with several years in the electronics and telecom industry, with extensive international experience. Tony earned a bachelor's degree in education from Northern Illinois University. In his spare time, he enjoys relaxing by his Aquascape water feature with his wife, three children, two dogs, and countless fish. Tony's an avid reader of business and fiction publications, and is an active participant with parent support groups for special needs children.





## **Major Awards Earned by Aquascape, Inc. and CEO Greg Wittstock**

CEO and Founder Greg Wittstock was named one of the Best Bosses for 2005, according to FORTUNE Small Business Magazine in conjunction with Winning Workplaces™.



In 2004, CEO Greg Wittstock was a nominee for the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.



Aquascape, Inc. made the Inc. 500 List of Fastest Growing, Privately-Held Companies in North America four years in a row:

2002 – 414<sup>th</sup>

2001 – 230<sup>th</sup>

2000 – 91<sup>st</sup>

1999 – 116<sup>th</sup>





***Published by The Pond Guy™ Publications***

The Pond Guy™ Publications is the official publisher of Aquascape books and catalogs. Here is a list of titles published by The Pond Guy™ Publications, a division of Aquascape, Inc.

**Wholesale Catalog** – Mailed to our contractor base with professional-grade product.

**Retailer Catalog** – Mailed out once a year. Geared toward the retailer looking to buy do-it-yourself products for the end-user.

**Pond Builders Bible** – A 323 page, step-by-step construction guide for contractors, covering all the aspects of pond building from product descriptions, to pond accessories, to building techniques.

**Pond Retailers Bible** – This retailer-g geared book contains 156 pages of water garden know-how. Retailers can use it to learn how to set-up their stores for water gardening; how to market, merchandise, and promote the product; and effective business practices.

**Succeeding and Prospering With Water Features, Volume II** – A sequel to our hugely-popular, sold-out Volume I, the title is self-explanatory. Contractors and retailers will learn how to get the most out of their water gardening business, with advice straight from The Pond Guy™ and customers who are succeeding with ponds.

**Contractors and Retailers Guide to Aquatic Plants** – A handy book detailing the types, design, and uses for aquatic plants.

**Contractors and Retailers Guide to Pond Fish** – Takes contractors and retailers through everything fishy, including the different varieties, how to sell them, and how to care for them.

**How to Conduct a Retail Build-A-Pond Day** – Aquascape Designs explores the ins and outs of promoting, marketing, and conducting a retail Build-A-Pond Day. A sample press release and certificate, as well as a step-by-step DVD are also included.

**The Pond Builders Guide to Break Even** – This book is designed to help contractors and retailers get a better grasp on their finances. It encourages them to be involved and to check out the balance sheet before the end of the year.

**The Pond Guy™ on Marketing** – This book preaches effective marketing strategies for those in the water garden business. Contractors and retailers learn what works in terms of advertising and free publicity.

**Aquascaper Updates**—Monthly newsletter for contractors, retailers and distributors.

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The following publications are available to the consumer:

**The Ecosystem Pond** – A book designed to teach people the ins and outs of ecosystem water gardening. An all-natural approach is showcased, with information on fish and plants, troubleshooting and maintenance, and products that are perfect for an ecosystem pond.

**Water Garden Lifestyles** – A coffee table style of book with gorgeous photos of ponds from all over the continent. Light text flows throughout the book, inviting readers to relax by their own ponds.

**Pond Building for Hobbyists**—A book geared toward the do-it-yourselfer looking to install a preformed pond, Pondless® Waterfall, or an ecosystem pond. The step-by-step guide takes a novice builder through all the steps necessary to build a water feature. It also includes sections on fish, plants, and maintenance.

**Hobbyists Guide to Pond Plants**—The ins and outs of the garden inside your water garden. The book explores the varieties of plants available, how to keep them growing in the pond, and much more.

**Hobbyist's Guide to Pond Fish**—Everything you need to know about pond fish. Learn about the different types available, how to care for them, and even some strange facts about them.

**Container Water Gardening for Hobbyists**—Container water gardens are the latest trend in water gardening! The beautiful photographs and step-by-step instructions of over 25 projects featured throughout this 128-page book will guide you through the process of creating your very own container water garden.

**Pondside Monthly**—Monthly newsletter for consumers.



## **Pondemonium®**

In July of every year, Aquascape, Inc. hosts the largest water gardening training event called “Pondemonium®.” Contractors and retailers are invited to learn about water features during this week-long educational event. Pondemonium® has something for everyone, from the person considering a career or business in water gardening, to the seasoned professional who desires the latest in the industry to help boost water feature sales. Experts in their fields provide beginning and advanced training. The beginning of the week boasts boot camps where attendees learn everything from sales and marketing, to proper fish care, to financial planning. During the week, Aquascape also teaches contractors and retailers how to construct ponds during Standard and Advanced Build-A-Pond Days.

The week also features Pond College, the industry’s premier water gardening educational event where customers learn about the latest innovations in water gardening, best business practices, and even sales and marketing training. Some of the top motivational speakers in the country also make an appearance during Pond College to pump up attendees and get them focused on success.

Time is allotted for fun as Aquascape offers an annual golf outing, a waterfall-building contest, and an appreciation dinner. The week wraps up with the Chicagoland Pond tour (hosted in conjunction with the North American Water Garden Society’s Pond Tour North America), where contractors and retailers can either navigate the tour themselves or participate on a guided bus tour.

The event continues to grow each year. Pondemonium® 2006 and 2007 boasted over 1100 attendees and more are expected for the 10th anniversary in 2009.





***Aquascape Belongs to and Supports the Following Organizations:***

American Horticultural Society  
American Nursery and Landscape Association  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
Association of Pool and Spa Professionals  
Association of Professional Designers  
California Landscape Contractors Association  
Georgia Green Industry Association  
Illinois Landscape Contractors Association  
Illinois Nurserymen's Association  
Irrigation Association  
Land Care Network Organization – PLANET Professional Land Care Network  
Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association  
North American Water Garden Society (NAWGS)  
Southern Nursery Association  
St. Charles Chamber of Commerce  
Texas Nursery and Landscape Association  
Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association  
World Wide Pet Supply Association



## ***Aquascape, Inc Receives LEED Silver Certification***

October 2007—Aquascape, Inc. is proud to announce that its main headquarters, Aqualand, has earned a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification. The LEED rating system offers four certification levels for new construction -- Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum -- corresponding to the number of credits accrued in five green design categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.



Aqualand is a 256,000 square foot facility featuring office and warehouse space. The roof of Aqualand is the largest sloping green roof ever constructed in North America. Aqualand is made with sustainable materials, which played a big part in the LEEDS rating system. Among the sustainable building products are energy efficient HVAC systems, water conserving plumbing fixtures, recycled steel building frame, etc.

“Obtaining LEEDS certification really ties in with our philosophies and the culture of our company in that we build natural ponds,” Jack Luedtke, Aquascape’s General Manager, said.

The LEEDS certification process begins from the first day the job is conceived, examining site selection, construction waste, and construction materials, among other things to award points in each category. Buildings that obtain Silver certification receive 33-38 points.

“What isn’t measured in the LEEDS process is employee satisfaction, but everyone who works here will agree that Aqualand is truly a superior environment,” Luedtke said. “We call it a workplace utopia because that’s the dream that our founder, Greg Wittstock, had for this building.”

