

PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL AQUATIC PLANTS LAYOUT CONTEST 2009 WORLD RANKING TOP27

Aqua Design Amano Co., Ltd. hosted the International Aquatic Plants Layout Contest 2009, and received 1,342 applications from 51 countries. In 2009 contest, we have seen a significant participant increase in Asian countries like China, Vietnam, and India. The increase in such countries reflects emerging popularity in planted aquarium hobby, and grand prize winner, Mr. Nguyen Tien Dung from Vietnam symbolized this year's contest trend.

Comment from Takashi Amano

I would like to thank all the applicants of International Aquatic Plants Layout Contest 2009. I also extend my gratitude to all the people contributed for promoting this international event, contest result announcement, and grading process. Each year we see increase in number of applicants and participating countries, and this is a proof many people in the world share a same hobby of planted aquarium. I am very delighted to this. Top prize winning layouts were occupied by the ones following basic layout style without being too eccentric. As number of applicant increases, we see more variations in styles, and many people pay attention to the new layout styles. But I believe many people thing about the basic point of planted aquarium layout again as orthodox style layouts were highly evaluated in this year's contest. Next year marks the 10th contest milestone, and we continue to make our best efforts in pumping up this international event. We look forward to seeing many aquarists' passionate layouts again in next year's contest.

Applicant by countries

For this year's contest, we have received total 1,342 layouts from 51 countries:

Argentina (2)	Australia (24)	Azerbaijan (1)
Belarus (4)	Brazil (13)	Bulgaria (3)
Canada (3)	Chile (1)	China (148)
Croatia (2)	the Czech Republic (3)	Cyprus (1)
France (11)	Germany (13)	Greece (4)
Hong Kong (71)	Hungary (1)	India (64)

Indonesia (33)	Ireland (1)	Israel (5)
Italy (24)	Japan (443)	Kazakhstan (1)
Korea (3)	Latvia (1)	Malaysia (86)
Macau (2)	Mauritius (1)	Mexico (5)
Moldova (1)	Netherlands (1)	Philippines (2)
Poland (53)	Portugal (5)	Qatar (6)
Romania (1)	Russia (19)	Serbia (7)
Singapore (35)	Slovakia (1)	Spain (16)
Sweden (5)	Taiwan (72)	Thailand (31)
Turkey (3)	United Kingdom (10)	U.S.A. (37)
Ukraine (15)	Venezuela (1)	Vietnam (47)

Grand Prize (World Ranking No.1)

Mr. Nguyen Tien Dung (Vietnam)

Title: Moment in Time

Evaluation:

The grand prize winning layout was selected by 3 judges as the best aquarium layout, and reached the top of 1,342 applications, the most in contest history. In addition to layout skills, originality is asked to the top prizes, but this layout was produced with high level of techniques based on standard layout composition, without any eccentric style expression. The composition with left/right weight balance 3:2 ratio, using good-looking driftwood is well-balanced, and stable. The stemmed plants in the background were neatly trimmed, and they show splendid coloring in clusters. Among many unpredictable style applications, this is a good example of planted aquarium composed by the basic layout principle.

Aquarium Tank: W120xD45xH40(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Echinodorus tenellus

Fissidens fontanus

Taxiphyllum sp.

Ludwigia brevipes

Cryptocoryne wendtii

Microsorium pteropus

Microsorium pteropus "Windelov"

Fish & Invertebrates:

Trigonostigma heteromorpha

Gold Prize (World Ranking No.2)

Mr. Chan Shih Hsien (Taiwan)

Title: Magic Forest

Evaluation:

It is quite interesting idea to tie moss on the under part, and ferns on tips of driftwood stretching upward. Especially unique foliage shape *Microsorium pteropus* Windelov was a good selection. However, it is difficult to maintain the size of *Microsorium*. This year we have seen many layouts using various moss and ferns like this one.

Aquarium Tank: W180xD60xH60 (cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Riccardia chamedryfolia

Vesicularia sp.

Taxiphyllum barbieri

Vesicularia antipyretica

Microsorium pteropus "Windelov"

Bolbitis heudelotii

Eleocharis acicularis

Echinodorus tenellus

Glossostigma elatinoides

Cryptocoryne parva

Eleocharis sp.

Vallisneria nana

Anubias barteri var. Nana 'Petite'

Bolbitis heudelotti sp.

Chlorella sp. "MARIMO"

Microsorium pteropus

Fissidens fontanus (Bach. Pyl.) Steud.

Hemianthus callitrichoides

Fish & Invertebrates:

Paracheirodon axelrodi
Paracheirodon simulans
Carinotetraodon travancoricus
Crossocheilus siamensis
Caridina japonica
Neocaridina denticulate

Silver Prize (World Ranking No.3)

Mr. Yuji Yoshinaga (Japan)

Title: Time of Eternity (Yaku Island)

Evaluation:

This is a layout with mountain scenery, and steep bedrock was skillfully recreated. Even though many elements were expressed in a confined space, details were neatly produced with various sizes of rocks, and Hemianthus callitrichoides was beautifully filling the space between the rocks. The stone raises a bit water hardness level, but this plant grows well under such a condition. The overall impression is not like an aquascape but an image of terrestrial landscape, and evaluation of judges was divided on this point.

Aquarium Tank: W90xD45xH45(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Hydrocotyle maritima Honda

Hemianthus callitrichoides

Eleocharis sp.

Fantinalis antipyretica

Fish & Invertebrates:

Megalampodus sweglesi

Neocaridina denticulate

Silver Prize (World Ranking No.4)

Mr. Josh Sim KH (Malaysia)

Title: Awakening

Evaluation:

The use of straight driftwood is interesting. Judging from the overall impression, it is

probably creator paid more emphasis on perspective, and on the natural feeling. Therefore, he intentionally used slim size driftwood in the central part, and emphasized the perspective. A passage leading to the back was produced by cosmetic sand in the middle and this also emphasized its effect. This layout has a problem in selection of driftwood as well as different images of left and right side scenery, but it seems original layout composition lead to a high appraisal from judges.

Aquarium Tank: W90xD45xH45(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Rotala rotundifolia

Rotala macrandra

Rotala sp.

Vesicularia dubyana

Fissidens fontanus

Bolbitis heudelotii

Microsorium pteropus sp.

Fish & Invertebrates:

Trigonostigma heteromorpha

Otocinclus sp.

Caridina japonica

Bronze Prize (World Ranking No.5)

Mr. Wang Chao (China)

Title: Looking for Mystery

Evaluation:

When producing an aquarium layout by using stones and driftwood, it is normal to mainly use either material and compose the layout. But in this case, the layout was composed by both stones and driftwood at the same strength and volume. This point became the originality of this work, and its strong and audacious composition is attracting the viewers. Fully grown *Eleocharis acicularis* in the background is holding together two different layout materials well.

Aquarium Tank: W120xD55xH50(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Eleocharis acicularis
Vesicularia montagne
Bolbitis heudelotii
Microsorium pteropus
Hemianthus callitrichoides

Fish & Invertebrates:

Hemigrammus ocellifer
Ancistrus sp.
Crossocheilus siamensis

Bronze Prize (World Ranking No.6)

Mr. Chow Wai Sun (Hong Kong)

Title: Towering Peaks

Evaluation:

From the texture and shape of rocks, we see creator's high rock arrangement skills. By using several aquatic plants in combination, it produced a slight variant, and broke the monotony common to this type of layout. Many layouts with a mountain scene were found in this year's contest, but this is the best and we feel excellent layout sense from this layout

Aquarium Tank: W152×D45×H55(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Glossostigma elatinoides
Hydrocotyle maritime
Limnophila sp. (Vietnam)
Rotala verticillaris
Fissidens fontanus
Fontinalis hypnoides

Fish & Invertebrates:

Paracheirodon simulans
Otocinclus sp.
Crossocheilus siamensis
Neocardina sp.

Bronze Prize (World Ranking No.7)

Mr. Lin Tin Chuan (Taiwan)

Title: Forest-Breath

Evaluation:

When looking only the driftwood arrangement, the gravity center is in the upper side, but stability is still found in this layout. That is the biggest attraction of this work. The use of *Microsorium* sp. with long roots is interesting and it produced a natural feeling. It seems natural feeling of dense forest is the theme of this layout, judging from the overall impression and title. If so, the use of hybrid plants like *Hygrophila polysperma* var. should have been avoided.

Aquarium Tank: W127×D60×H50(cm)

Aquatic Plants:

Riccardia chamedryfolia

Hygrophila polysperma var.

Fontinalis antipyretica

Vesicularia antipyretica

Bolbitis heudelotii

Microsorium pteropus Windelov

Eleocharis sp.

Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides

Anubias barteri var. Nana

Sagittaria subulata

Hemianthus callitricoides

Myriophyllum matogrossense

Microsorium sp.

Nymphoides coreana

Pellia endiviaefolia

Fish & Invertebrates:

Hemigrammus bleheri

Trigonostigma espei

Carinotetraodon travancoricus

Ancistrus sp.

Caridina japonica
Neosiphon denticulate

World Ranking #0008
Title: Ups and Downs
Nguyenthi Xuanthuy
VIET NAM

W120xD45xH40 (cm)

The selection and arrangement of driftwood is excellent, and the creator recognizes the importance of composition. The whole layout balance is also excellent, and we can see the experienced aquascaper's techniques.

World Ranking #0009
Title: Peaceful
Ngo Truong Thinh
VIET NAM

W100xD40xH40 (cm)

We see the creator's high techniques in his rock arrangement and plant trimming. The layout could be better by replacing the cosmetic sand space with plants.

World Ranking #0010
Title: Fearless: Spirit of The Rainforest
AJ Judy Prajitno Putra
INDONESIA

W300xD80xH75 (cm)

The arrangement of driftwood is interesting, and this is ambitious layouts with powerfulness of a large size aquarium. But it is regrettable to see the roughness in the foreground substrate.

World Ranking #0011

Title: Rain Forest

Hsu Yung Lin

TAIWAN

W127xD60xH60 (cm)

We see dynamic power in the excellent use of driftwood, which is frequently found in layouts from Taiwan. But the image of stones does not match the driftwood, and it brings discomfort in the overall impression.

World Ranking #0012

Title: Forest Path

Yee Kin Cheong

MALAYSIA

W90xD45xH45 (cm)

The way driftwood pointing the top is interesting, and it is like seeing a scene of different world. The vertical lines produced by driftwood and plants are keys in this layout.

World Ranking #0013

Title: Treasure

Cliff Hui

HONG KONG

W100xD50xH50 (cm)

The big stone ambitiously placed in the left foreground decides the impression of this aquascape. But in reality, it was exaggerated by visual effects of extra-wide angle lens, and we encourage taking pictures with standard procedure in a normal situation.

World Ranking #0014

Title: The Phoenix and The Dragon

Wong Kam

HONG KONG

W150xD45xH52 (cm)

We see the aquascaper's careful layout maintenance skills in excellent condition of *Fissidens* sp. attached on the driftwood. But it is not enough as a layout component. It is desirable to have an accent by stones or colorful plants.

World Ranking #0015

Title: Over the Blue

Tatsuo Harada

JAPAN

W120xD45xH45 (cm)

An iwagumi layout produced by well-studying the Nature Aquarium, and rock arrangement is very good. But it would be difficult to make a higher ranking without challenging an original layout style.

World Ranking #0016

Title: A Silent Morning

Zentaro Watanabe

JAPAN

W120xD30xH45 (cm)

We can feel the power of stones from the arrangement of stones. It became an original layout expression by combining stones ferns plants usually attached on the driftwood.

World Ranking #0017

Title: A Breezeway in the Valley

Eishi Yamamoto

JAPAN

W60xD30xH36 (cm)

Natural scenery was described by long-stretched twigs and ferns. More lively feeling could have been produced by having more volume of aquatic plants in the aquarium.

World Ranking #0018

Title: Roar of Yellow River

Zhang Jianfeng

MACAU

W90xD45xH45 (cm)

Horizontal lines in the middle part depict the flowing Yellow River. But it could have been better by replacing Riccia and Glossostigma, with cosmetic sand.

World Ranking #0019

Title: Mystique River

Yeo Siak Wee

MALAYSIA

W90xD45xH45 (cm)

A flow of water was described by white sand, and the layout was designed from a mountain stream as motif. It was produced with fussing over details; arrangement of stones along the river flow, for example, but the layout could be better by having more power in the layout design.

World Ranking #0020

Title: Wind from the South

Hidekazu Tsukiji

JAPAN

W120xD45xH45 (cm)

The selection of stones is excellent, and two main stones were arranged very well. But it could be better by taking balance of stones and trimming lines of stemmed plants.

World Ranking #0021

Title: Cloud

Hironori Handa

JAPAN

W90xD45xH45 (cm)

The combination of stones and aquatic plants is excellent, and their volume is overwhelming. The disadvantage is that the creator could not express the perspective perfectly while keeping it in mind.

World Ranking #0022

Title: Oriens et Occasus (East and West)

Pasquale Buonpane

ITALY

W160xD52xH60 (cm)

The iwagumi style itself is orthodox, but the creator arranged *Fissidens* sp. around the stones, and created a unique aquascape. It is regrettable the picture had a problem.

World Ranking #0023

Title: Swampland

Szymon Fiedorowicz

POLAND

W167xD37xH40 (cm)

It is natural to see weeds growing around the fallen tree, but it could be better by having another driftwood on the right side. The details should have been produced more carefully, including untouched both left and right corner.

World Ranking #0024

Title: Whispers of Stones

Nguyen Ngoc Tri Nhan
VIET NAM

W120xD45xH40 (cm)

The arrangement of stones is interesting, but the stemmed plants in background including *Myriophyllum* sp. do not match with stones. The picture was taken at the right moment when fish were in a central position.

World Ranking #0025
Title: The Lost Canyon
Artur Frankowski
POLAND

W130xD40xH40 (cm)

It is a good example of panoramic size tank layout, but it could be better by having a variation in height of stemmed plants in the right and left side.

World Ranking #0026
Title: Rainy Season on My Home
Jullawong Papunta
THAILAND

W90xD45xH45 (cm)

The creator selected small leaf stemmed plants and arranged a detailed composition. Therefore, he succeeded to create a much wider looking layout in a 90cm tank.

World Ranking #0027

Title: Mysterious Bermuda

Jamie Lin

TAIWAN

W120xD60xH55 (cm)

The creator used different sizes of trunk like layout material, and expressed perspective in the layout. It does not look natural, but it provides a wondering feeling of eyes drawn into in the back of the aquascape.

Contest Grading Guidelines

The international Aquatic Plants Layout Contest has been established among the world's planted aquarium hobbyists as an annual event, and this year it recorded the highest applications ever, a total of 1,342 applications from 51 countries and areas. For the grading, a preliminary screening was conducted and the top 100 works were selected, as it is impossible all the judges get together in one place, and make a grading on all the 1,342 applications. The images of the top 100 aquarium layout pictures were sent to all 18 judges in 12 countries, and the world ranking was decided by tallying the grades of each judges. In order to provide an impartial grading system, judges were equally selected from Europe, Americas, Russia, and Asia. We have made sure the grading be conducted under strict grading guidelines by each judge, but please understand each judge's evaluation is not necessarily absolute. The judging criteria were divided to artistic impression point (maximum 100 points) and technical point (5 categories, maximum 20 points each). From this year's contest, we decided to add extra 10 points to the aquarium layout each judge selected as the best. As a year rolled on, aquarium layout level got pegging, and the layout earned high average score occupied the high ranking, and the layout each judge selected as the best is not reflected on the final world ranking. The best aquarium layout should be outstanding work which attracts people's attention. So we decided to each judge's evaluation be reflected on the layout's total score. We also found many layouts design influenced by previous contest's high ranking layouts, and the one partially renovated from previous contest applications. Those similarity judgment left to each judge, but some judges made a strict point reduction on such layouts with similarity. From these points, we can say the layout with creative originality was highly evaluated.

After the strict grading process, the top prize winners were decided.