

Bass Pond Management

by Len Gertis, Brown's Trout Hatchery & Don Shaw, Highline Bass

Stocking



Stock largemouth bass alone, or with fathead minnows. Bass may be stocked in either cool-water or warm-water ponds.

Warm-water ponds: The temperature of the surface water ranges from 76-80°F during the hottest part of the summer and exceeds 80°F for a week or more.

Cool-water ponds: The temperature of the surface water exceeds 72°F, and ranges from 72-75°F, but raises as high as 80°F only for several days during the summer.

Species and Management Intensity

Bass alone will provide a fishable population. Growth rate and size will be increased if forage fish such as fathead minnows are stocked with bass. Bluegills are not recommended as forage fish.

Fish Spawning

Largemouth bass spawn readily in ponds in the shallow water during early summer when the water temperature reaches approximately 71°F. Most bottom materials are suitable for spawning.

Increasing Food Supply

Ground agricultural limestone can be used to increase the fertility of the water thereby increasing production of natural fish foods. It increases the availability of nutrients already present or added to a pond. Other chemicals, such as gypsum and alum, will settle out suspended clay more efficiently, but these substances tend to acidify the water. Fish productivity is lower in acid waters. **CAUTION:** Pond owners should **NOT** use lime or quicklime (calcium oxide), as these may kill the fish.

Feeding

Feeding fish in farm ponds is unnecessary when fish are stocked at the recommended rates. Although supplemental feedings may increase growth rate an inch or two per year, it is rather expensive and is not generally needed.

Fertilization

A single application of fertilizer, or soybean meal (#50-100 per surface acre when water temperature is below 70°), in a newly constructed pond tends to hasten the establishment of a natural food supply. Additional fertilization is generally not recommended in New York ponds. In most northern states fertilization more often stimulates growth of algae and rooted aquatics rather than plankton.

GENERAL INFORMATION

RATES FOR STOCKING BASS

125 to 150 per surface acre (Bass)

500 to 600 per surface acre (Fathead Minnows)

CONTAINERS FOR TRANSPORT

125 Bass per 25 gallons

500 Minnows per 25 gallons

Large plastic garbage cans are well suited for use as containers. Only unchlorinated water should be used. It is best to use pond water for bass. Spring or well water may be too cold and could cause shock.