

# Trout Pond Management

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

## Water Temperature

Trout live in water temperatures between 33° - 75°F, but grow most rapidly in water 50° - 65°F and are less susceptible to parasites and diseases. Ponds are unlikely to be this cool unless fed by springs or deep groundwater. Open water in winter may indicate the presence of these water sources. Brook trout need cooler water than rainbow trout.

## Stocking Numbers

The surface area, water quality, and size of fish stocked determine the number of trout a pond will support. A pond will support more little fish than big fish. The standard fall stocking rate is 400 to 500 2-4" fingerlings per acre. This stocking rate may result in 8-9" trout the first year. Reduced numbers favor larger trout. Trout stocked in the fall benefit from favorable growing conditions early the following spring and may reach "pan size" more quickly.

## Restocking

A pond stocked in fall with 2-4" trout will produce many small but usable trout the first year. If you fish these small fish lightly, you may catch some trout weighing 1½ to 2 pounds (15-16") during the second year. Waiting another year or two for a 2-pound trout to grow larger may not be worthwhile. Trout grow slowly after reaching this size, and have a high death rate. Spawning seldom occurs in ponds. It is best to fish your pond frequently and restock every year or two.

## Stocking Procedures

Avoid stocking trout in water above 68°F. Before releasing fish in pond, check the temperature of water in the container and the pond water at a point 6" below the surface where fish are to be released. If the temperature difference is greater than 10°, gradually add pond water to containers over a period of 20 minutes until temperature difference is less than 10°. Place container in pond and tip it gently on its side so fish can swim out. Do not pour fish into pond.

## Feeding Trout

Ponds of average fertility usually produce enough natural food to support about 100 pounds of trout per surface acre. You can increase the carrying capacity of your trout pond and get steadier trout growth by supplementing natural foods with commercially prepared ones. If commercial feed is used, don't over-feed. A good "rule of thumb" is 1½-2% of body weight daily, i.e., 100 pounds of fish = 1½-2 pounds feed. Feed only what the fish will clean up promptly. Food remaining after 10 minutes probably will not be eaten. Decomposing food uses oxygen and may cause fish loss. If the water temperature is above 65°F-70°, *don't feed!*

## General Information

### RATES FOR STOCKING FALL TROUT

400 to 500 2 - 4" per surface acre  
300 to 400 4 - 6" per surface acre  
200 to 300 6 - 8" per surface acre

### CONTAINERS FOR TRANSPORT

2 - 4" 100 per 30 gallons  
4 - 6" 75 per 30 gallons  
6 - 8" 50 per 30 gallons

**Large plastic garbage cans are well suited for use as containers. Only unchlorinated water should be used. Pond or spring water is suitable for transporting trout.**