

## **Stocking Trout and Bass with food supply (Information obtained from NYS DEC website)**

Deciding on what fish species to place in your pond depends on the pond type (i.e. coldwater or warmwater). Coldwater ponds are usually deeper, spring fed ponds whose surface temperature seldom, if ever, rises above 72 degrees fahrenheit. In contrast, the surface temperature of warmwater ponds remains above 72 degrees fahrenheit for considerable periods in the summer. Coldwater ponds are generally stocked with trout, while warmwater ponds are stocked with largemouth bass.

Trout are unable to reproduce in most ponds and must be restocked every two years to maintain satisfactory fishing. A standard stocking rate is 400-600 fall fingerlings (5 to 6 inches long) per surface acre of water.

Warmwater species of fish have an advantage over trout in the pond situation because they can reproduce. Either a largemouth bass/ bluegill combination or bass/ golden shiner combination are generally recommended. However, fathead minnows can be substituted for the bluegill as the prey species. A standard stocking rate is 100 bass fingerlings per surface acre along with 500 bluegill fingerlings. Fathead minnows may be stocked at a rate of 300-400 fingerlings per acre.

Generally, bass should be stocked when pond water temperatures are equal to the hatchery water temperatures. Fingerlings should be stocked in September and October. Bass and minnow fingerlings can be stocked at the same time. In an established pond, minnow fingerlings should be stocked a year or two prior to stocking yearling or adult bass. Bass should not be harvested until they have reproduced successfully, which is usually two years after stocking them as fingerlings. Therefore, they may be fished for but only a few should be removed at any one time.

Stocking bluegill with the bass provides another species for the angler to enjoy, especially children. However, an intensive amount of fishing pressure must be placed on the bluegill because of its high reproductive ability. In time, if an adequate number of bluegill are not removed, they will overpopulate the pond and become stunted. Research by Cornell University indicates that 15 times as many bluegills as bass can and should be harvested. The average bass/bluegill pond can support annual harvests of only about eleven adult bass per acre. Overharvest of adult bass will obviously tip the balance in favor of bluegills.

If the pond owner is only interested in bass or is just an occasional angler, a bass and minnow combination is a better choice. While bullheads are popular with some anglers, they can overpopulate a pond and become stunted. Furthermore, they are bottom feeders and their foraging often keeps the water muddy. Turbidity will work to the disadvantage of bass if they are present in the pond.

You must obtain a stocking permit from DEC before stocking fish into any water in the state. Stocking permits are required for ponds because it is important to have accurate records of what fish species are being stocked. Since many ponds have an outlet or the possibility of overflowing, fish have the potential to escape into adjacent natural or public waters. Such accidental introductions can have disastrous effects on native fish species. As such, stocking permits are an attempt to prevent undesirable species from escaping and competing with existing species.