

Sport Fish Suppliers And Stocking Guidelines For Stocking Mississippi Ponds

As a pond owner, you face decisions in selecting a fish supplier. Here are some questions to ask before making an informed decision:

- Is there a warranty on the fish? Keep in mind that fish may be delivered alive but may die several days later because of hauling stress, insufficient tempering to the pond water, or disease. Get it in writing!
- Does the supplier produce the fish, or does he or she buy them from a third party? Vendors who produce their own fish are more likely to know the health history and pedigree of the fish.
- What species and sizes of fish do they supply? Not all suppliers sell all species of fish, and the sizes, strains, or reproductive capacity might not be right for your pond.
- References! Ask to contact some of their satisfied customers! Check out the company with the Better Business Bureau from their state.

Remember, commercial fish producers are in the business of selling fish. It is not in your best interest to get your stocking recommendations directly from them. Your county Extension director, local Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks biologist, or a specialist from the Wildlife & Fisheries Department at Mississippi State University can assist you with stocking plans free of charge. Basic stocking rec-

ommendations for Mississippi farm ponds are on the next pages for your convenience.

Recommended Fish Species For Mississippi Farm Ponds

The widely recommended combination for sustainable good fishing is largemouth bass, bream (either bluegill alone or a combination of bluegill and redear sunfish), and channel catfish.

In a properly managed pond, largemouth bass and bluegill have consistent reproduction and create a predator-prey balance that can sustain good fishing for years without restocking. Redear sunfish, also known as “shellcracker,” also reproduce naturally and provide additional fishing opportunities and control of snails that may promote fish parasites.

Channel catfish usually do not reproduce well in ponds with largemouth bass and must be restocked periodically. The replacement catfish should be at least 8 inches long to avoid being eaten by the bass.

Either northern largemouth bass or Florida largemouth bass are appropriate for stocking in Mississippi farm ponds, but it is best not to mix the two.

We do not recommend hybrid largemouth bass, also known as tiger bass, gorilla bass, and “F1 hybrids” because although the original stocked fish may experience enhanced growth, the offspring of the original stocking may be poor.

It does not matter whether you stock regular bluegill or coppernose bluegill.

Under no circumstances should you stock hybrid bream with other species of bream, nor should you stock them when bass fishing is your main objective. Hybrid bream are best suited for very small ponds where they will be fed and harvested.

Triploid grass carp, or “triploid white amur,” should be stocked to help prevent invasion of aquatic weed species. We recommend only triploid grass carp in Mississippi; please request verified triploids. In new ponds or ponds without weed problems, five grass carp per acre should be enough.

If weeds are a problem, you may need 15 or more grass carp per acre. Most grass carp eat vegetation, so do not introduce them into ponds where you want plant growth.

You can introduce fathead minnows and threadfin shad as extra bass food. It is best to stock these fragile species when water temperatures are cool in the fall or spring. Fathead minnows usually need to be restocked, since bass can quickly eliminate them.

Threadfin shad are more persistent, but they may die out in very cold winters in northern Mississippi and will need to be restocked. Stock threadfin shad only when managing for trophy bass, since they may compete with bream.

We do not recommend crappie, other sunfish species (besides those listed above), and other catfish species in ponds. We do not recommend crappie for impoundments less than 50 acres because they tend to overpopulate, resulting in a pond full of stunted fish. They compete with both bass and bream for food and even prey on young sport fish.

Do not stock any other species of fish without first consulting your county Extension director, local Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks biologist, or a specialist from the Wildlife & Fisheries Department at Mississippi State University.

In a new or renovated pond, stock bluegill and redear sunfish in the fall, along with channel catfish and grass carp if desired. The pond does not need to be full when you stock, as long as the pond will fill to full pool by the following spring. Stock fish based on

the full pond acreage, not on the surface acreage at the time of stocking. You do not need large fish, since predators are not in the pond at this time.

Stock largemouth bass fingerlings the following spring. This way the bream have had time to produce young bream for the bass to eat. Stock fish only at the recommended rates and ratios listed here. You can begin fishing the pond after one year, but do not begin harvesting bream until the second year, and do not begin harvesting bass until the third year. If this stocking schedule cannot be followed, contact your local fisheries biologist or Extension specialist for customized stocking recommendations.

Do not catch and move fish from another water body to stock a pond. A number of serious pond problems can result from this stocking approach. First, some fish species look very similar, and can be easily mistaken. Although spotted bass, longear sunfish, and young gizzard shad look very similar to largemouth bass, redear sunfish, and threadfin shad, they certainly don’t perform the same in farm ponds!

Second, moving fish between water bodies is an easy way to introduce serious diseases and parasites to your pond.

Third, it is very difficult to get the numbers of small fish needed to start the pond off “in balance.” Working with a certified fish supplier ensures that you stock the right numbers and sizes of disease-free fish.

Recommended Stocking Rates And Species Combinations

Below are the stocking recommendations for ponds greater than one acre. Only hybrid bream, channel catfish-hybrid bream, and channel catfish only combinations are recommended for ponds less than one acre. For both combinations containing bass and bluegill, no other bass or bream stocking is usually necessary after the initial stocking. Periodic restocking is required for hybrid bream and may be required for channel catfish. When stocking channel catfish into an established bass population, stock 8- to 10-inch fish to

Recommended Stocking Rates and Combinations for Ponds One Acre or Larger						
Stocking combination	Largemouth bass	Bluegill	Redear sunfish	Channel catfish	Grass carp	Hybrid bream
Bass-bluegill	50	500		50 ^a	5 ^b	
Bass-bluegill-redear sunfish	50	350	150	50 ^a	5 ^b	
Hybrid bream	50 ^c					750
Channel catfish-hybrid bream				100		350–500
Channel catfish only				100–150		

^aOptional. Stock up to 50 channel catfish per acre if desired.
^bRecommended. Stocking five grass carp per acre in weed-free ponds helps prevent future weed problems.
^cLargemouth bass are to control hybrid bream reproduction. Stock them at the same time as hybrid bream fingerlings, and do not harvest bass.

Sport Fish Suppliers (continued)

Hatchery	City/State	Phone	Fish Species												
			NB	FB	HL	BG	CN	RE	HB	CC	FM	GC	TS		
Fish Wagon: FWI, LLC, DBA	Harrisburg, AR	870-578-9501	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Hardin's Fish jimmyhardin@TDS.net	Calhoun City, MS	662-628-5328	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Harvey G. Huffstatter d.b.a. MS Big Fish	Jackson, MS	601-613-5413	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hendry's Catfish	Waynesboro, MS	601-735-9870		X			X				X			X	
Hopper-Stephens Hatcheries, Inc.	Lonoke, AR	501-676-2435	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Keo Fish Farm kkeo@centurytel.net	Keo, AR	501-842-2872											X	X	
J. M. Malone and Son, Inc. www.jmmaloneandson.com	Lonoke, AR	501-676-2800	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Natural Resource Management nrmc@comcast.net	Collinsville, MS	601-626-8088	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	
Parker's Fish Farm	Simpson, LA	337-383-7820	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					
Shy Hammock Farm	Scooba, MS	662-476-8615	X				X							X	
Slade's Fish Hatchery sladesfish@hughes.net	Lumberton, MS	601-796-2000	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Southeastern Pond Management www.sepond.com	Ridgeland, MS	601-853-0680	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Sunrise Fisheries, Inc. www.sunrisefisheries.com	Lake Village, AR	870-265-1205	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Suttle Fish Farm www.suttlefish.com	Laurel, MS	800-228-9557	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The Bait Shop	Foxworth, MS	601-441-6703	X		X	X	X	X	X						
Thomas, Ronnie	Hattiesburg, MS	601-466-5113	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Tommy's Fish Truck www.pondandlakestocking.com	Romance, AR	601-796-6349	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Whitaker's Trophy Hatchery	Woodville, MS	601-888-6454		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Wigington Stock Fish	New Albany, MS	662-534-8947	X			X					X		X		

Fish Species Key

NB = Northern largemouth bass **CN** = Coppnose bluegill **FM** = Fathead minnows **FB** = Florida largemouth bass
RE = Redear sunfish **GC** = Grass carp (white amur) **HL** = Hybrid largemouth bass **HB** = Hybrid bream
TS = Threadfin shad **BG** = Bluegill **CC** = Channel catfish

This publication is a joint effort of the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. To request corrections to the information provided or to have a farm included in the next printing of the list, send the correct information to Dr. Wes Neal, Assistant Extension Professor, Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, Box 9690, Mississippi State, MS 39762. Please note that Mississippi state law prohibits any person from selling, offering for sale or exchange any game fish whether taken within or coming from outside the state. Such sales are legal if MDAC has issued a permit to the owner of a private pond to sell fish grown or cultivated for stocking under the MDAC regulations. All firms listed in this publication have a current MDAC permit.



The information given here is for educational purposes only. References to commercial products or trade names are made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended against other products that may also be suitable.

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