

General Considerations

There's more to satisfactory pond fishing than just putting in some fish. Ponds, like gardens, need proper design and management if a substantial crop is to be harvested. Just as in gardening, many questions must be answered before management can be done well. Some of the important questions are:

- What is my goal in having the pond? Fishing? Swimming? Wildlife? Irrigation? Livestock watering? Nature study? Scenery?
- If there are several goals, which is the main one, and how do the others rank in priority?
- What, roughly, is the pond's potential for producing fish in terms of space, water fertility, and other aspects of pond quality?
- What water depth should I build (or rebuild) for?
- What kind(s) of fish should I stock? What sizes? How many? When?
- When can I start fishing the pond?
- How many fish should be harvested each year and at what sizes?
- How can I prevent or remedy overpopulation of fish and stunted growth?
- How can I prevent or control nuisance growths of aquatic weeds and algae?
- Am I willing and able to spend the time and effort needed to achieve the results I desire?

This bulletin provides information to help the owner or manager develop answers that apply to his or her particular pond.

Goals

Lack of a clear goal is often at the root of unsatisfactory pond construction and management. Frequent switching between several goals is also a problem. It is best to decide on and work toward a single primary goal based on careful assessment of pond potential. It's a good idea to write the goal down and keep it in view. Stick to the goal for enough years to see whether it works.

Satisfactory fishing is undoubtedly the primary goal, or at least a secondary one, for people reading this bulletin. We urge you to write the goal down in terms of the kinds of fish desired and also to list what the lesser goals are.

Don't be misled by the "multiple-use" concept. Trying to accomplish too many things with the pond can mean that none works out well. Don't expect swarms of large fish in a clearwater situation with flocks of ducks and geese, a livestock watering area, and large amounts of irrigation water to be provided by the same pond. With effort, you'll be lucky to achieve one major benefit and a few pleasant side effects. For example, a soundly managed bass or trout pond might also offer a little swimming and skating, as well as an emergency water supply and be a scenic asset frequented by songbirds and visited occasionally by migrating ducks.

A reasonable goal for a pond fishery in our region is a moderate amount of angling for small to medium-sized fish. Some angling fun and a meal of fish now and then are reasonable expectations. Michigan ponds can't produce as many

