

Kinds of Fish To Use In Ponds

It's important to know something about the lives of fishes used in ponds. Each species differs from all others in its characteristics of feeding, surviving, growing and reproducing. Ponds should be designed and managed with specific requirements of the fish in mind. If the pond environment is unsuitable for the kind of fish stocked in it, reduced growth, insufficient reproduction, or poor survival may result.

There are two basic categories of pond fishes—**warmwater** and **coldwater** fishes. Warmwater fishes such as bass, bluegills, other panfishes, or catfish, do best in ponds where summer water temperature is more than 70°F (21°C). A pond may be suited for coldwater fishes (the various kinds of trout) if summer water temperature remains below 70° when measured a foot below the surface near the center of the pond and if **dissolved oxygen concentration stays above 5 ppm**.

The so-called “coolwater” fishes such as northern pike, muskellunge,

walleye and perch, generally don't thrive in small bodies of water. They aren't considered suitable for pond fisheries in Michigan.

Information on stocking, harvest and other management is in Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of this bulletin. Information on where to get fish for stocking is in Chapter 6.

Coldwater Fishes

The coldwater fishes include trout and their relatives such as salmon, grayling and whitefishes or ciscoes. Of these, only trout are presently considered suitable for coldwater sportfishing ponds in Michigan. To survive and grow well, trout require water temperatures that seldom rise above 70°F (21°C). Dissolved oxygen levels should stay above 5 ppm, which is high compared to the needs of warmwater fishes.

As with other fishes, trout growth varies greatly between ponds, depending on food supply, crowding, and size of fish.

Trout eat a wide variety of organ-

Table 5-1. Summer length ranges at various ages for fishes in Michigan ponds. These are rough statewide values. Growth may be somewhat greater where fish are uncrowded and temperature and food supply are ideal. Growth can be much slower, especially where ponds are overpopulated.

Kind of fish	Length in inches					
	First summer (Age 0)*	Second summer (Yearling)	Third summer (2-yr-old)	Fourth summer (3-yr-old)	Fifth summer (4-yr-old)	Sixth summer (5-yr-old)
Rainbow trout**	4-6	9-14	14-17	15-19	***	***
Brook trout	2-4	6-8	8-12	9-14	11-16	***
Largemouth bass	1-4	6-8	8-10	10-12	12-14	13-17
Smallmouth bass	1-4	4-7	7-10	10-12	12-14	13-17
Channel catfish	1-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	13-15	15-17
Bluegill	½-2	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	6½-7½

*Fingerling.

**From fall-spawning stock in hatcheries.

***Very few survive to this age, and growth at this age is extremely variable.

