

## **STOCK NEW PONDS WITH ADULT FISH**

Because of the on-going drought in Tennessee, many new ponds built last summer did not fill with water so fish could not be stocked. Other ponds filled enough that fish were stocked, but subsequently went dry due to lack of rainfall so the fish died. If either of these scenarios apply to you and your pond now has water in it, there is a way to get your pond fish population started without waiting until next fall.

Go fishing, catch some adult bluegill and largemouth bass (10 pairs of each species per acre) and stock them in your pond. This needs to be done in early spring before spawning begins. These fish will spawn and stock the pond with their offspring.

Largemouth bass weighing about three-fourths pound are ideal size. They will be able to live and do well on an insect diet, while larger ones likely require mostly a fish diet. The bass will be difficult to sex. Those with larger, rounded abdomens can be assumed to be females. When spawning time gets closer, white milt can be squeezed from males. At any rate, a group of 10 bass per acre should contain some males and some females.

Any bluegill weighing three to four ounces will be sexually mature. They are fairly easy to sex. The males are darker overall, especially on the head and back, with an orange breast. The females are lighter gray color with obvious vertical bars on their sides, and the breast is not colored orange. These fish will spawn several times during the summer and furnish forage for the young bass. Also, if they are in the pond where you are getting your bluegill, catch five pairs of red-ear adults and stock them in your pond.

If catfish are desired, stock no more than 100 per acre. They should be no smaller than 6-7 inches, assuming the adult largemouth bass stocked were about 12 inches long.

A pond stocked in this way and fertilized should produce harvestable size largemouth bass, bluegill and catfish within 12 months. Harvest about 150 pounds per acre the first year and about 200 pounds in subsequent years, being careful to take 4-5 pounds of bluegill for each pound of largemouth bass.

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