



Current Report

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Fingerlings for Pond Stocking

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Fish for stocking a fishing pond can either be purchased from a private hatchery or be obtained from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) without cost. Regardless of the source, the first step should be to educate yourself about pond management.

NREM-9209, "Improved Fishing in Your Pond" discusses many ways to improve fishing besides the stocking of fingerlings. NREM-9206, "Common Pond Problems" deals with issues such as correcting muddiness, excess aquatic plant growth, the yellow grub parasite, turtles and other situations that concern pond owners. "Managing Pond Fisheries in Oklahoma" gives information on many pond management topics including trophy bass, catfish only ponds, and hybrid bluegill. A limited supply is available for \$3.00 from ODWC Fisheries Division, 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., PO Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK, 73152. Before ordering, check for availability at wildlifedepartment.com, Outdoor Store – Publications. Once the supply is exhausted, it will be posted online.

Here are some important facts to keep in mind as you make plans for stocking fingerlings into your pond:

- Stocking fingerlings on top of an existing fish population is discouraged. Such fingerlings will likely be eaten by existing bass. See NREM-9209, "Improved Fishing in Your Pond," for information on how to improve an existing fish population.
- Observe the fingerlings closely and check for any of the following disease signs. Not all sick fish will show disease signs, so it may be safest to reject all of them if some appear sick. Some signs of illness include:
 - loss of balance
 - hanging near the surface
 - bulging eyes
 - swollen or shrunken stomach
 - sores or spots or other abnormalities.
 - cotton-like growth – white or brownish
- There may be undesirable fish mixed into your fingerlings. Take care not to introduce such problem fish into your pond by checking closely for unknown fish. Bass fingerlings will have a single strong stripe along the side (Figure 1). Bluegill fingerlings will have strong vertical bars (Figure 2). Reject if there are unknown fish.

Buying fingerlings from private hatcheries gives pond owners the option of stocking other fish species and getting larger size fingerlings. It pays to visit the hatchery before you



Figure 1. Young largemouth bass can be identified by their single, strong horizontal stripe. (Photo credit: Outdoor Alabama)



Figure 2. Young bluegill have vertical bars. (Photo credit: Outdoor Alabama)

buy, to inspect the fish you'll be buying. Ask about the details of the guarantee – length of time mortalities are covered etc. A list of private hatcheries is given below.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation offers free largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish fingerlings produced at state hatcheries in Byron, Durant, Medicine Park,

and Holdenville. You must first meet their requirements and accept their conditions:

- Pond owner must have current fishing license,
- Pond must be totally without fish,
- Pond must be at least one half acre,
- Game rangers are allowed to check anglers for fishing licenses,
- You are not required to let the public fish your pond – unless part of the pond is on public property.

Your application to the ODWC is generally required to be in before June if you wish to receive fingerlings that year. Bluegill and channel catfish fingerlings are provided in the fall, followed by largemouth bass fingerlings in the spring. This staggered stocking gives the bluegill time to grow, spawn, and establish a good forage base on which the bass can feed. Contact the Fisheries Division by mail (PO Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152) or phone (405-521-3721) to receive an application. Complete a separate application for each pond and return it to the address on the application. You will then be sent a letter advising you of the application number(s) and the appropriate time fish will be available. The game warden in your county will arrange an on-site evaluation of the pond(s). When fish are available, you will receive a notification by mail with the date, time, town, and location where the fish can be picked up.

Private Hatcheries

Arkansas Pond Stockers
PO Box 374
Harrisburg, AR 72432
1 800 843-4748

Catfish, Hybrid bluegill, Redear, Bluegill, Sunfish, Bass, Crappie, Grass carp, Fathead minnow- delivery to set locations in eastern Oklahoma.

Crystal Lake Fisheries
Rt 2, Box 528
Ava, MO 65608
417 683-2301
Rainbow trout

Dunn's Fish Farm
PO Box 85
Fittstown, OK 74842
580 777-2202
Catfish, Grass carp, Bass, Redear, Bluegill, Koi, Fathead minnows - delivery to set locations throughout Oklahoma.

Inslee Fish Farm
PO Box 207
Connerville, OK 74836
1 800 222-9505
580 836-7150
Bass, Grass carp, Bluegill

Sulphur Fish Hatchery
PO Box 409
Sulphur, OK 73086
580 622-5385
580 622-5716
Catfish, Bass, Bluegill

Texoma Fish Hatchery
PO Box 506
Whitesboro, TX 76273
903 564-5372
Catfish, Bass, Bluegill

Corrections, new listings, or updates should be sent to Marley Beem, Assistant Extension Specialist, Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management, 008C Ag Hall, Stillwater OK 74078, (405) 744-3854, marley.beem@okstate.edu

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