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Are Trout Right For My Pond?

Prior to making the decision to stock trout, one must know not only the current conditions and characteristics of their pond, but what they will be, or are likely to be during the worst of times, i.e. middle of summer and winter. Spring and fall are the best times to stock trout in most smaller ponds. However, not knowing if they are appropriate can be a disaster as fish mortalities can occur immediately or in the future upon changing conditions.

The optimum water temperature range for rainbow trout is 50-60 degrees F and the acceptable range is 45-70. Although trout can survive down to 33 or 34 degrees, little or no growth will occur. Water temperatures above 70 can be lethal even if exposure is only a few hours. Ponds with adequate depth will usually provide an escape for trout under extreme temperature events so this is also important criterion. Ample areas of 8-10 feet in depth are necessary if temperatures outside the acceptable range are anticipated.

Knowledge of your pond area and volume are essential in determining the correct number of trout to stock. Flow, or turnover rate are critical components to consider, as well as the effectiveness of any aeration device/water feature at increasing dissolved oxygen levels. To calculate the area of your pond, multiply length by width and divide by 43,560 to arrive at surface acres. Determine the average depth and multiply by the surface acres to arrive at number of acre-feet.

Acceptable stocking rates for trout vary between 200 and 400 fish per surface acre depending on a multitude of factors including the aforementioned, as well as forage opportunities for the fish and anticipated angler activity. If your pond is being stocked for the first time, it is recommended to stay at the lower end of this rate until you see how the trout perform throughout their first year.

It is usually not necessary to artificially feed trout in your pond unless there is a definite lack of natural food sources available. If you must feed, do it seldom and only administer what is readily consumed within a few minutes. Over-feeding can contribute to water quality problems from wasted feed. Only purchase as much feed as needed for 2-3 months and store in a cool, dry place. If it spoils or becomes moldy, discard immediately.

You need to know that there are lots of critters that enjoy dining on trout, such as otter, heron and osprey. These and others will quickly recognize a food source and exploit it, so this in itself is reason enough not to stock too many trout in your pond. Floating or submerged cover will reduce the occurrence of diving predators and steep banks with minimal shallow areas will discourage wading birds.

A certain amount of aquatic vegetation is beneficial, as well as shade trees around the pond perimeter. Avoid the use of herbicides or pesticides nearby your pond, as trout are generally more susceptible to these types of contaminants.

For those of you located around Bend where Ceratomyxa Shasta (C-Shasta) disease is prevalent, we are getting some promising results from an alternate strain of rainbow. These are an Eagle Lake/Steelhead cross that appear to possess a similar resistance as did the Deschutes 66 strain which we have used successfully in the past, but unfortunately no longer produce. We will continue to offer these at a discount until they are proven to indeed be resistant.