

Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife
Guidelines for Stocking Ponds in Delaware with Gamefish

It takes effort to maintain balanced, healthy fish populations, especially in ponds <1 acre. If fishing is already satisfactory and the fish community is well balanced, stocking additional fish may not be recommended. Overcrowding can result in slow growth and poor condition. The fish are competing for resources and if the population is too dense, there is less food available. For example, too densely populated Largemouth Bass can greatly reduce the prey population (such as Bluegill) and result in underweight bass with slower than average growth. Conversely, overpopulated Bluegill are typically small and can impact the recruitment of bass because they eat bass eggs and fry. It's a delicate balance!

In Delaware, Largemouth Bass and Bluegill are the species typically recommended for stocking fishing ponds. These species thrive in a pond environment and tend to keep one another's population in balance. Channel Catfish are compatible with bass/bluegill and can also provide additional angling (especially for youth). The following stocking rates pertain to fish per acre, thus the number stocked should be adjusted for ponds <1 acre in size.

Species	Fingerlings (fishing 2-3 yrs in future)		Adults (immediate fishing)	
	Number per acre	Size (inches)	Number per acre	Size (inches)
Bluegill	600	1-2"	70	3-5"
Largemouth Bass	100	2-4"	20	8-14"
*Channel Catfish	100	2-4"	25-50	>8"

**This species may have to be restocked occasionally. High predation on their young can occur unless specialized spawning structures (i.e. open pipes or barrels) are submersed in the pond.*

Water Quality:

Water quality should be evaluated prior to stocking to ensure it is conducive to fish survival. At a minimum, the following water quality parameters should be measured:

Water Quality Parameter	Range conducive to growth and survival of Largemouth Bass and Bluegill
pH	6.5-8.5
Dissolved Oxygen	>5 mg/l
Temperature	*65-85 ⁰ F
Salinity	>1.5ppt can reduce embryo survival

**Tolerance varies but this range is good for spawning and growth of these species. They can tolerate temperatures outside this range but can be stressed at the limits.*

Fish Habitat:

Species in the sunfish family, such as Largemouth Bass and Bluegill, have a strong affinity for structure in their environment and will seek out areas for shelter and to forage. Submersed branches (brush piles, downed tree branches, etc.) along the shoreline create a refuge and feeding habitat for juvenile fish and enables some escape from predation. Brush piles or submersed trees (such as recycled Christmas trees weighted down with a cinder block) in deeper water provides foraging habitat for larger fish. Aquatic vegetation along the shoreline (such as pickerel weed, arrow head, spatterdock,) will also provide habitat and benefit water quality.

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