

GRASS CARP FOR WEED CONTROL IN PONDS

Stocking Chinese grass carp, sometimes called *white amur*, in farm ponds is an effective way to control aquatic weeds and filamentous algae. Grass carp are almost exclusively plant eaters, so reliance on herbicides is greatly reduced.

Depending on the amounts and types of aquatic weeds to be controlled, stocking rates of 5 up to 100 per acre are recommended. The lower rate is advisable unless the weed problem is extremely heavy. In smaller ponds where some of the grass carp can be recovered once the weeds are under control, a higher rate of 75 to 100 per acre can be stocked. In ponds where largemouth bass are already established, grass carp stockers should be 9 to 10 inches long or they will be eaten. Smaller grass carp can be stocked where predator fish are absent.

Once grass carp are very large (30-35 pounds), they are not very efficient at eating aquatic weeds. Catch the large ones and eat them as they are very good. Replace the harvested grass carp with 9 to 10 inch stockers.

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CHECKING FISH POPULATION BALANCE IN FARM PONDS

In order to maintain balanced fish populations in farm ponds, it is important to know the structure of the populations. There are two basic ways to do this, fishing and seining.

Where a desirable population is present in a pond, many bluegill 6 inches and larger will be caught. Many different sizes of largemouth bass in good condition with an average weight between 1 and 2 pounds will be taken. If most of the bluegill caught are 3 to 5 inches and thin and the few bass caught are large and in good condition, the pond is overcrowded with bluegill.

A pond with a balanced population when seined with a 15 foot minnow seine during the summer will have an average of two young-of-year bass and recent bluegill reproduction. A few intermediate bluegill will likely be caught, also. No young bass and no bluegill reproduction indicate an unbalanced fish population. This balance check method is quite effective, but is only useful after both bass and bluegill have already spawned.

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