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News Release

Fertilizing Fish Ponds

Farmers know that proper fertilization can greatly increase crop yields. Similarly, pond fertilization can increase fish yields three to four times. Also, fish will be in better condition and catch by fisherman usually improves. Fertilizers used in ponds stimulate growth of microscopic plants called algae. Algae are eaten by microscopic animals (zooplankton) and insects which serve as food for bream, which in turn are eaten by bass. Algae also make the water turn green, which helps to shade the pond bottom, preventing growth of troublesome rooted weeds and filamentous algae commonly called pond “moss.”

Liquid fertilizers are superior to granular fertilizers in promoting growth of algae in farm ponds. This is because the nutrients are already in solution, making them more rapidly available to the algae. Also, smaller applications of liquid fertilizer can be used, which may reduce the cost of pond fertilization. Common grades of liquid fertilizer are 10-34-0 and 11-37-0. Always follow the label directions when applying fertilizer.

Make the first application of fertilizer in late February or early March. Follow with two additional applications at two-week intervals. Then make three more applications at three week intervals. Continue applications at monthly intervals or whenever the water clears enough that a white disk attached to a yardstick is visible to a depth of 24 inches. Stop applications by the last week in October. Because watershed fertility and pond uses vary, the standard fertilization schedule is not necessarily the most efficient for all ponds.

Do not practice haphazard fertilization. Fertilizing once or twice a year is worse than not fertilizing at all. Do not fertilize weedy ponds- the fertilizer will only make the weeds grow faster. For more information, please contact Lewis Tapley, Regional Extension Agent—Forestry, Wildlife, Natural Resources and Ponds at the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 or email taplell@auburn.edu. You may also call and request publication *ANR-277 Management of Recreational Fish Ponds in Alabama* for more information on this subject. This publication is also available on our website at www.aces.edu/StClair, just click publications at the top of the page.

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