Brown Trout are much sought after by anglers. It is an elusive fish, more difficult to catch than the Rainbow Trout. Commonly hiding out in the shade, this species can grow to large sizes and put up a real fight!

**Brown Trout Advice:**

This fish will take pellets, but it will also happily feed on minnows and other small fish species. It handles about the same temperature ranges as Rainbow Trout, which means it is unlikely to survive the summer in most ponds unless they are spring-fed and cool, even in mid summer. However, you can stock brown trout in the early fall and have it to fish for until the following summer. Expect for them to run into trouble when the water temperature rises above 72F.

**Black Crappie**
Loved by some and hated by others; the unpredictable nature of the Black Crappie is probably the cause of these mixed feelings.

Female Black Crappie is able to generate 60,000 eggs/pound of body weight, which makes stocking them a gamble. Many people have had success with them, though, mainly because no spawning occurred.

**Black Crappie Advice:**

Generally, we recommend not stocking this fish in smaller ponds. This species will not eat fish pellets. Small crappie finds plenty of natural food in ponds, such as zooplankton, insect larvae, snails, and leech, but adult Black Crappie feed mainly on small fish. If you would like to stock Black Crappie, we recommend about 200 per Surface Acre.

**Bluegill**

The Bluegill is a favorite with kids and adults alike, and is probably the best-known member of the sunfish family. The only drawback with this species is its tendency to overpopulate.

You must maintain a strong population of predators, especially Largemouth Bass, to keep the Bluegill in balance. Also, it is very important to catch and keep a number of Bluegills each year. When this is done, Bluegill can have tremendous growth rates and provide many meals for the fisherman.

**Bluegill Advice:**

Bluegill feed on a wide variety of organisms, so highly fertile waters are not needed. For ponds over 2 acres, we recommend stocking 1000 fingerlings, or 100 adults per Surface Acre.
Channel Catfish

If you would like to add diversity to your pond without upsetting the natural balance, Channel Catfish is a safe stocking choice.

Because their natural spawning habitat is hollowed-out riverbanks, there is very little chance that they will reproduce and overpopulate in a pond or lake. Channel Catfish are considered omnivorous, which means that they will eat just about anything.

Fertile ponds can handle up to 200 per Surface Acre, but if you want to maintain clear water we recommend that you stock about 50 to 100 per Surface Acre – at rates higher than that, they tend to stir up the pond sediments because of their bottom-feeding behavior.

Hybrid Bluegill

The Hybrid Bluegill is a cross between a male Bluegill and a female Green Sunfish, and is sometimes referred to as a Hybrid Sunfish. As a result of the cross, the Hybrid Bluegill is ~80-90% male, giving it a reduced reproductive potential and making it an ideal choice for those ponds prone to Bluegill stunting.

Hybrid Bluegill Advice:

The Hybrid Bluegill is a voracious feeder, depending mostly on insects, zooplankton and very small fish. For this reason, they should only be stocked in ponds with a strong forage base. Generally, we recommend 500 Hybrid Bluegill per Surface Acre in ponds 2 acres or smaller.
Largemouth Bass

The Largemouth Bass is one of the most sought after by anglers, and is also very well suited for stocking in most mid-western ponds.

**Largemouth Bass Advice:**

If Largemouth Bass are provided with an adequate food supply, you can expect tremendous growth rates. Fish, crayfish, frogs, and large insects make up their diet.

This species is commonly used to control populations of Bluegill in ponds and lakes by stocking approximately 100 per Surface Acre. We recommend less than that (about 75 per Surface Acre) in Hybrid Bluegill ponds.

Largemouth Bass will reproduce in most ponds and usually will not control their own population if stocked alone. This can lead to stunting and is very difficult to correct. By stocking Hybrid Bluegill or regular Bluegill at our recommended rate, you can usually achieve a natural balance between predator and prey.

Muskellunge Fish: Northern Pike's Popular Cousin

The Muskellunge is a close relative of the Northern Pike and considered the ultimate prize fish for many fishermen. It prefers large lakes with both deep and shallow basins, along with tributary streams, and it spawns in shallow bays with a muck bottom.

**Muskellunge Advice:**

Muskellunge can have a positive effect in waters over-populated with perch, bass, and to a very limited extent on Bluegill. Stock 1-2 per Surface Acre in suitable waters void of Northern Pike.
Northern Pike

The Northern Pike is one of the largest gamefish in the Midwest. It feeds continuously through the day, which makes it popular with fishermen. This fish can eat fish up to 18 “ long, ducks and even fully grown Muskrats.

Marshes and flooded lowlands generally provide the spawning habitat for Northern Pike; so many ponds and lakes do not have the proper environment for their reproduction.

**Northern Pike Advice:**

Because of their territoriality and heavy feeding, only 2-4 per Surface Acre should be stocked.

Pumpkinseed

The Pumpkinseed is a panfish species closely related to the Redear Sunfish. Its brilliant coloration alone makes it a favorite of many fishermen, but it also yields tasty fillets that rival Bluegills.

**Pumpkinseed Advice:**

What sets the Pumpkinseed apart from the Bluegill, which is a similar size, is its ability to eat snails, the intermediate hosts of several fish parasites.

Redear Sunfish have traditionally been stocked for this purpose, but the Wisconsin DNR does not allow Redear stockings, and severe winters in the upper Midwest may kill them.

Pumpkinseeds, though, are native to all of Wisconsin and most of Illinois, making them a terrific choice. Bear in mind, however, that Bluegill must also be present to focus the Pumpkinseed’s
foraging habits predominantly onto the snails. Therefore, when stocking a new pond, we recommend about 100 Pumpkinseeds and 200 Bluegill per surface acre. When stocking a pond already established with Bluegill, we recommend 100-500 Pumpkinseeds, though the amount depends on many factors.

**Rainbow Trout**

Rainbow Trout is a great fish to stock if you plan on ice fishing. Sustained temperatures over 72°F will prove fatal. Many ponds and lakes do have bottom water below 72°F through the summer, but often there is an oxygen depletion, which renders this cool water useless. Some deep rock quarry ponds can hold trout through the year, as well as ponds fed by cold flowing spring water.

**Rainbow Trout Advice:**

Rainbow Trout are strong feeders, so plan on stocking minnows or feeding 40% protein fish pellets if you do not have a large forage base. We recommend stocking about 100 per Surface Acre, but much greater amounts can be held under certain conditions.

**Smallmouth Bass**

Although the Smallmouth Bass is very popular with fishermen, it is not always the best choice for shallow lakes or ponds. This species requires cool water temperatures for good growth, and normally has a hard time competing for food with the more aggressive Largemouth Bass. Stone quarry-type ponds with a strong forage base normally provide good Smallmouth Bass habitat because of their deep cool waters and rocky substrate.

**Smallmouth Bass Advice:**

If there are no Largemouth Bass, we recommend stocking approximately 100 per Surface Acre.
**Tiger Muskie**

Tiger Muskie: Northern Pike/Muskellunge hybrid

The Tiger Muskie is commonly stocked in situations where reproduction is not wanted, because this fish is usually sterile.

It grows faster initially than the Muskellunge, although it does not ultimately grow as large because it does not live as long as the Muskellunge. Even so, it can still reach 25 pounds or more under ideal conditions.

Another desirable characteristic of this species is that it tolerates warmer water than either Northern Pike or Muskellunge.

**Tiger Muskie Advice:**

We commonly stock this species to control Largemouth Bass in ponds that are conducive to Northern Pike reproduction. Stock 1-2 per Surface Acre.

**Walleye**

Walleye generally prefer large, deep, cool open-water areas with rocky shoals and inlet streams. However, if conditions are right, a certain number of this fish can be maintained in smaller lakes and ponds.

**Walleye Advice:**

Walleye are bottom dwellers during daytime hours, so lakes and ponds with stagnant summertime bottom water do not provide good habitat. Also, they are among the first to die during low oxygen conditions, so pond owners considering stocking Walleye should install an Aeration System (see aeration section).

At night, they feed predominantly on smaller fish such as bass, perch, minnows, and to a certain extent Bluegills, so a strong forage base is necessary.
Generally, we recommend stocking about 20 per Surface Acre.

**Yellow Perch**

![Yellow Perch Image]

Table fare for the famous Wisconsin “Friday Night Fish Fry”, the Yellow Perch is considered the best eating of all fresh water fish, but unfortunately its pond reputation does not match this.

Being a very prolific fish with few spawning substrate requirements, the perch can cause serious stunting problems in nearly any lake or pond. The Walleye is a natural predator of the Yellow Perch, and there is evidence they can help keep perch populations under control. Therefore, it is a good idea to only stock perch in those waters that will also support Walleye. Yellow Perch consume a wide variety of food items, but fish do not become a major component of their diet until after reaching 7 “in size.

We recommend stocking 200 per Surface Acre in ponds with Walleye.

**Fathead Minnow**

![Fathead Minnow Image]

The Fathead Minnow is the most affordable and durable of the forage species. We are able to stock them in all but the hottest temperatures. It is a small prolific minnow that spawns from the spring until late summer on the underside of nearly any material near the shore.

**Fathead Minnow Advice:**

Reproduction can be improved by placing any kind of structure in 1 to 3 feet of water (see Artificial Fish Habitat for more information). It is very important for the minnows to be able to escape predators while reproducing.
Fathead Minnows eat a wide variety of aquatic organisms, from Mosquito larvae to algae, and they can withstand extremely low oxygen levels. Because of this they can survive and thrive in a wide variety of water conditions. We recommend stocking about 25 pounds (about 5000 each) per Surface Acre in new ponds without a forage base. If you have a pond full of Largemouth Bass, or other predators, it may take over 100 pounds per Surface Acre to establish a population.

**Golden Shiner**

The Golden Shiner is the largest of the forage species, commonly growing up to over 5” in length. Spawning occurs from June to August over beds of submerged vegetation.

The fish is known as a “mosquito larvae eater.” Its up-turned mouth and surface/midwater feeding behavior ideally suit this species for mosquito control.

It is the most expensive of the forage species, but in weedy ponds it is the best suited to thrive.

It is a great forage species for trophy Largemouth Bass ponds because of its size. Think of it this way: a bass could chase down and eat 5 Fathead Minnows or 1 Golden Shiner – this allows the saved energy to go towards growth. Also, larger bass will not waste their time with tiny little minnows, but they will feast on Golden Shiners.

Stock 25 pounds (there are about 40 to 80 per pound) per Surface Acre in new ponds that do not have predators yet. It may be necessary to stock about 100 pounds per Surface Acre in ponds with a Largemouth Bass Population.