

Pond Management 101

Pond management expert Greg Grimes explains how to bulk-up your pond's potential and turn it into the fish-producing pond of your dreams!

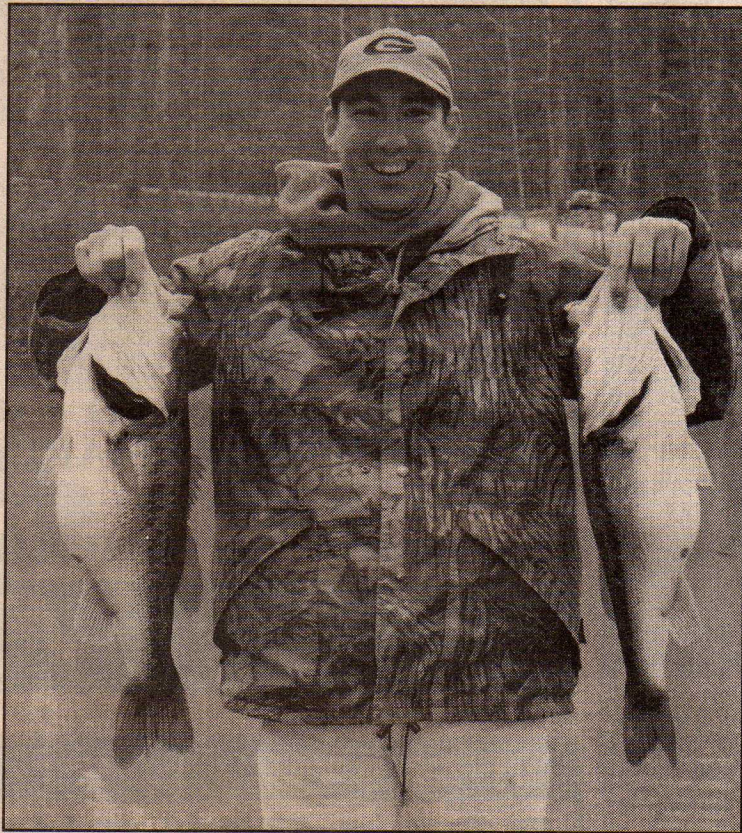
By Greg Grimes

Imagine yourself one June day in the near future walking out in the backyard and down to your private fish pond. You slide on a Texas-rigged sand-colored lizard before casting into one of your favorite home-made brushpiles when you feel a tap-tap-tap. You reel down to free the slack out of your line right before you slam your rod tip straight up in the air, a good hook-set. Three minutes later you land an 8 1/2-lb. hawg. Impressive, yes, but something that happens once-in-a-blue-moon? Absolutely not, at least not after implementing the proper pond management techniques.

There are over 90,000 ponds and small lakes in Georgia, and unfortunately most of these are not seeing their full potential. By practicing pond management techniques, you can dramatically improve your pond's fishing quality. The information in this article will send you through a step-by-step process to help you get the most out of your pond.

Weed/Algae Control

I'll start you on the right road to managing your pond by looking at one of the biggest problems with small bodies of water, weeds. You know what I'm talking about. You can't even throw a Rat-L-Trap in some ponds without getting an accumulation of the slimy mess on your treble hooks. You may be asking yourself why are weeds bad when some of your favorite fishing holes on reservoirs are the weed beds. In a small body of water like a pond you can quickly have greater than 30 percent weed coverage where weeds go from being beneficial to harmful. These weeds create too many places for bluegill to hide and results in slow-



Want to catch largemouths like these two 8-pounders? Through proper pond management techniques Greg Grimes tells you how.

er growth rates for bass, and a stunted bluegill population. Fortunately, there are two solutions to lowering weed populations in your lake, herbicides or stocking sterile grass carp.

Herbicides are the most expensive route to take, but they provide a quick weed kill. Most of these environmentally-safe herbicides are available at feed-and-seed stores. To decide which herbicide you need, first have the weed properly identified. You can do this by calling your County Cooperative Extension Service and giving them an oral description of the plant. If an identity can't be reached over the phone you can simply mail a sample of the weed and an identification will be made for free. Now, just by reading the herbicide label, you can identify which herbicide will be best for controlling the particular weeds in your pond.

The application of a particular herbicide in your pond depends on several variables such as time of day, application methods and your water

quality. Answers to these questions can be found by calling a Fisheries biologist at the Department of Natural Resources, your County Extension Agent or a licensed commercial applicator.

When used properly, herbicides are very effective, but they do not keep the weeds from coming back, especially in shallow areas. Your pond may require one to five additional treatments a year.

A second method for weed control is the addition of sterile grass carp. These fish are strictly vegetarians and offer a more economical choice than herbicides. When stocked in proper numbers they will keep grass mowed for up to five years. Generally, you want to stock 10 to 12 carp per acre,

and they run about seven dollars apiece for the 8- to 10-inchers. Look in the Farmers Market bulletin where there are usually numerous grass carp suppliers listed. I believe this is the best, least time-consuming way to control weeds because all you do is put the carp in the pond and let them munch away. However, you need to cover your spillway to prevent grass carp from escaping.

Fertilization/Lime Applications

Probably the most misunderstood aspect of pond management is fertilization. I can't tell you how many times I have heard the wrong advice on why and how to fertilize a pond. In many cases, unless a pond is fished and harvested regularly, fertilization is not necessary. In fact, a haphazard fertilization program will only lead to stunted fish populations. However, proper fertilization can be a powerful fish-producing tool.

One misconception about fertili-

