Grass Carp for Aquatic Weed Control

Treating aquatic weeds with chemicals is always difficult and often cost prohibitive with effective treatments ranging from $75 to over $300 per acre depending on the problem. It is much better to employ preventative measures including the stocking of grass carp.

Grass carp, or the White Amur serves as a valuable biological control for aquatic weeds. They can provide economical long-term protection from many weeds that are commonly found in Arkansas waters. Newly constructed or renovated ponds should be stocked with 3 to 5 fish per acre. Ponds with moderate to heavy weed infestations require 5 to 10 or more fish per acre for adequate control. It may require a year or more for grass carp to catch up with the weed problem before a noticeable reduction occurs. Stocking grass carp before there is a weed problem is a positive step toward prevention.

Newly stocked ponds can be stocked with 2 to 6 inch carp while 9 to 12 inch fish are required when adult bass are present. The cost of the grass carp depends on size, quantity and whether they are sterile triploids. In Arkansas, both the sterile triploid and the normal diploid grass carp are legal for pond use. Both types are equally efficient and the diploid fish are often cheaper.

Grass carp control certain species of aquatic weeds better than others. They prefer to feed on succulent submerged weeds (i.e. Nagas and Chara) over the more fibrous weeds (i.e. alligator weed and water primrose). Table 1. indicates the feeding preference of the grass carp. As the fish grow larger (over 7 lbs) they become less efficient at controlling the weeds. These fish should be replaced or supplemented every 5 to 7 years. Larger grass carp can be harvested by snagging, bow fishing, spearing or angling. Although somewhat bony, the grass carp is considered very good to eat.

Table 1. Feeding preferences of grass carp on some common aquatic plants.

High	Moderate	Low
Chara	Duckweeds	Eel Grass
Naiads	Pond Weeds	Watermeal
Hydrilla	Bladderwort	Cattails
Elodea	Fanwort	Milfoil
	Water Pennywort	Parrots Feather
	Coontail	Water Hyacinth
	Water Primrose	Alligator Weed
	Filamentous Algae	Spatterdock
		Water Lily
		American Lotus
		Watershield
		Sedges
		Reeds

Grass carp are attracted to flowing water and will swim with the flow. For this reason, all spillways and drains should be covered with a fish barrier to prevent carp from leaving the pond during periods of overflow.

For a listing of Grass Carp suppliers, please refer to the Sportfish Suppliers Directory: http://www.uaex.edu/aqfi/extension/pdf/Sportsfish.pdf