

Consumer Guidelines for Pond Management Consultants or Fish Suppliers

The Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society has established guidelines to assist pond owners in the selection of a private pond consultant or fish supplier. In order to make an informed decision, pond owners may wish to ask the following questions:

Consumer questions for pond management consultants:

1. How many years of experience do you have in this business?
(An established business may have more experience with unusual problems or needs)
2. Do you have a staff member with a fisheries management degree?
(A manager with a fisheries degree would be better trained in scientific pond management)
3. Is he/she certified by the American Fisheries Society?
(The AFS certifies biologists, based on training and experience in fisheries science)
4. Do you have the necessary license or permit required by your state?
(Some states require that managers be licensed to do business)
5. Do you carry liability insurance or bonding for your services?
(Insurance may protect the consumer should a problem arise as a result of damage or mis-management)
6. How will you survey my pond, and will I receive a written report?
(At a minimum, a qualified pond manager should check a pond first-hand, and provide a written report on findings and recommendations to the pond owner)
7. Will you perform the needed management?
(A good manager should be able to implement the recommendations, not simply stock fish as a cure-all for your problems)
8. Can you provide me with a list of references?
(An established, reputable manager should have plenty of satisfied customers)
9. How are your fees based?
(Managers may charge by the job, or by the hour. Get an estimate in writing, up front)

Consumer questions for fish suppliers:

1. What is the warranty on your fish?
(Some suppliers only guarantee live fish delivery, but the fish may die later from hauling stress or disease)
2. Can you certify the genetic composition of your fish?
(Some strains of fish are more suited to certain situations (Florida bass, for example), but some hatcheries do not routinely check their brood stock or fingerlings for genetic purity. Some states require that only "triploid" or sterile grass carp may be stocked)
3. Are the fish you supply guaranteed to be free of exotic or unwanted species?
(Exotic species can harm a fish pond, and cause problems when they escape the pond)
4. Do you raise the fish, or do you buy them from someone else?
(It's important to know the source of the fish provided, should problems arise)
5. What species and sizes of fish do you supply?
(Some suppliers only sell or raise certain species or sizes of fish that may not be right for your pond)

If you're still concerned about a manager or fish supplier, you may wish to contact your local fisheries biologist for a "second opinion". Most are happy to provide advice over the phone.

These guidelines were established by the Small Impoundments Committee of the American Fisheries Society, Southern Division. Agencies that distribute farm pond management brochures or booklets may wish to include this list as an insert to assist pond owners in making sound decisions.