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Clearing Muddy Fishponds

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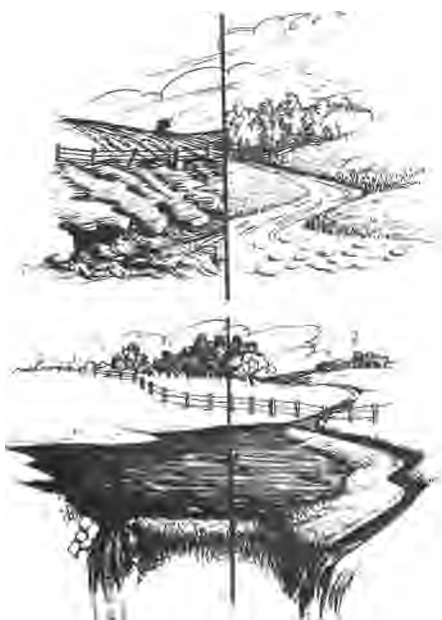
Muddy ponds produce fewer pounds of fish than ponds that are always clear. The reasons are simple: (1) Muddy water cuts out sunlight needed to produce fish food. (2) Heavy mud deposits flowing into pond cover and kill fish roe (eggs).

Some ponds stay muddy only a few days after each rain. However, new ponds are muddy for weeks with clay particles from the dam, scraped

pond bottom, and the nearby areas. Ponds in some places never clear because of clay material suspended in the water.

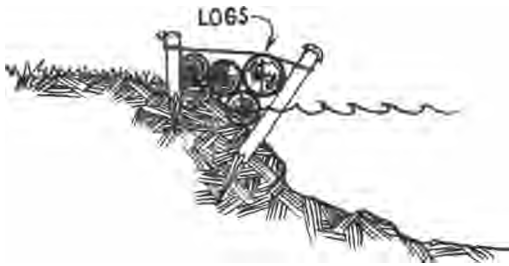
Regular plasterer's gypsum (calcium sulfate) will clear many muddy ponds by settling out the clay particles. Treatment is inexpensive and easy.

Gypsum keeps muddy water clear for a year or longer. It is useless to use gypsum if heavy rain will wash it out of the pond.



Permanent Control of Muddy Water. If a pond is muddy from an "outside" cause, take steps to keep it clear permanently:

1. Plant a good cover crop to prevent erosion if soil and silt are washing from a hillside.
2. Dig a diversion ditch to turn away excess water flowing through the pond.



3. Riprap raw banks and the dam with logs or rocks so wave action will not muddy the water.

4. Plant centipede or bermuda grass on the dam and bare banks around the pond.

5. Fence the pond and build a stock watering trough below the dam. Supply the trough with a small pipe through the dam.



Pond Demonstration. If the pond on your farm is usually muddy, you may want to treat it with gypsum as a 4-H Club demonstration. To make the demonstration effective, have your 4-H Club agent take color pictures of the pond both before treatment and after the water has cleared. These before-and-after pictures can be made into slides and shown to your club and other farm groups. In addition, you can make before-and-after pictures showing permanent control of muddy water.

Fruit Jar Demonstration. You can set up a simple demonstration to show how gypsum clears muddy water. Here are the steps:

1. Fill two clean quart jars with water from either a pond or a pothole that is constantly muddy.

2. Place 2 heaping tablespoonfuls of gypsum into one jar. Shake well. Label this jar "Treated." Do nothing to the second jar of muddy water, except to label it "Untreated."

3. Check the jars after they have been set aside for a few hours. Notice that the treated water is clear and the untreated water is still muddy.



How to Treat Ponds. In a pond that is always muddy use 15 pounds of gypsum per 1000 cubic feet of water. Add more gypsum (up to 25 more pounds) if the pond does not clear within 2 weeks.

The best way to apply gypsum is to shovel it from a boat. Spread the material as evenly as possible over the pond surface. Then immediately stir the water with an outboard motorboat.



Requirement for 4-H Project: Demonstrate fruit jar test with muddy water. Visit one pond that has excessively muddy water and outline IN DETAIL what should be done to correct muddiness.