



# Getting the Right Limestone for Your Pond

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Finely crushed limestone rock is commonly added to fish ponds to correct problems with low pH and alkalinity. The decision about whether or not to add limestone is based on water or soil testing. Details about when limestone is needed, how much is needed, and how it should be applied are in Extension Publication MP-360, Farm Pond Management for Recreational Fishing. If it is determined that you need to lime your pond, it is **CRITICAL** that you choose the right material for the job. The use of other compounds with similar names can result in the death of all of your fish!

## RIGHT: *Limestone*

The proper material for liming a pond is crushed limestone rock often known as “ag-lime”. This is just limestone rock pulverized into small granules and dust that are easy to handle and quick to dissolve. This is the same material commonly spread on pastures in areas with acid soils. It is gray and granular. It dissolves very slowly in water and produces a nearly neutral pH that is right for the fish. Limestone rock is composed of carbonates and bicarbonates of calcium and magnesium.

## WRONG: *Lime*

*Quick Lime:* If limestone is baked at very high temperatures in a kiln, it changes into a different material known as quick lime. This material is sometimes used as a soil treatment in construction and agriculture, but it is very different from limestone. Quick lime is a white dusty corrosive powder. It dissolves in water to quickly produce a very high pH that will **kill your fish**. It should never be added to ponds and it is not a substitute for limestone. Quick lime is primarily calcium oxide.

*Hydrated Lime:* If Quick Lime is exposed to moisture, it reacts with water to form hydrated lime. The chemistry and appearance of hydrated lime is very similar to that of quick lime. If you put it in your pond it will quickly raise the pH and **kill your fish**. Hydrated lime is primarily calcium hydroxide.

*Slaked Lime:* This is the same thing as hydrated lime. If you use it instead of limestone, it will **kill your fish**.

# Be sure that you are using the right material!