

# Mosquito Fish



Western mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) are small freshwater fish that feed on mosquito larvae. An adult mosquito fish can eat up to 500 mosquito larvae in a single day.

Mosquito fish are a great solution for ornamental ponds, livestock troughs, unmaintained pools, and other water features. They are compatible with other pond fish such as goldfish, koi, and carp, and do not require special care or feeding beyond providing appropriately treated water and shelter from predators. In San Mateo County, mosquito fish will generally survive the winter, but may become less active during cold periods.

Small water features such as livestock troughs need only a few fish, while a swimming pool may need ten or more fish to achieve mosquito control.

Mosquito fish breed throughout the summer, giving birth to large numbers of well-developed, active young. The newborn fish are approximately one-half inch in length, and immediately begin eating mosquito larvae. They will grow to a size of approximately three inches and can live up to three years.

Mosquito fish do not need any special care or feeding, and in most cases your mosquito fish population will sustain itself from year to year with no additional effort.

## Need Mosquito Fish?

**The District provides mosquito fish free to the public.**

**Residents living within the District's service area may call our office to schedule a delivery. Residents living outside of the District's service area are welcome to pick up fish at our office.**

**For more information, call  
(650) 344-8592  
or visit  
[www.smcmvcd.org](http://www.smcmvcd.org).**



SAN MATEO COUNTY  
MOSQUITO & VECTOR  
CONTROL DISTRICT

## Transporting Fish

Plastic containers or bags are best for transporting fish. Glass or metal containers may quickly become too hot or may be toxic to the fish. If sealing the container, make sure the air space is equal to the volume of water in the container. Keep the container out of the sun and place the container in the pond as soon as possible.

## Preparing Your Pond

To prepare your pond for mosquito fish, make sure it gets adequate sun exposure, provides places for fish to hide from predators, and is protected from harmful runoff or other contamination. If there is excessive algae or other organic material, the water may need to be changed or filtered. Too many plants growing in the pond or foliage hanging into the water may allow mosquito larvae to hide from your fish.

Before stocking your pond with mosquito fish, make sure the water has been treated for harmful chemicals. Tap water in San Mateo County is treated with chloramines, which will CANNOT be removed by allowing water to stand. Water must be treated using conditioning chemicals (available at most pet or fish supply stores) or an activated charcoal filter. Fish cannot survive in untreated tap water.

Newly-constructed ponds may leach harmful substances into the water. It is important to allow water to stand for several days, then drain and refill your pond.

## Adding Fish

It is also important to allow your new fish to acclimate to the temperature of your pond. Float the closed bag of fish directly in the water for at least 20 minutes or until the water temperature in the bag is equal to the water temperature in your pond. Then the fish can be released from the bag.

## Supplemental Feeding

It is not usually necessary to feed your mosquito fish. In fact, they may stop eating mosquito larvae if another food source is available. Excess food may cause bacteria to grow in the pond, harming the fish.

## Removing Mosquito Fish

If you no longer want your mosquito fish, you may return them to the District office. It is against California Department of Fish and Game regulation for private citizens to plant mosquito fish in waters of the state without a permit. (Title 14 CCR, Fish and Game Code, Section 1.63, Section 6400, and Section 238.5). Do not release mosquito fish into rivers, stock ponds, lakes, or creeks.

## San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

(650) 344 - 8592  
1351 Rollins Road  
Burlingame, CA 94010

Monday-Friday  
8a.m. to 4:30p.m.

[www.smcmvcd.org](http://www.smcmvcd.org)

