



BAIT TANKS BY SUNSHINE

The difference between fresh bait and cut bait is the difference between catching fish and just chumming, and successful anglers know that a good bait tank means healthy, lively shad. With all of Oklahoma's great striped bass, hybrid striped and white bass fisheries, it's no wonder why a cottage industry of bait tank manufacturers has developed.

In addition to all three of these fish being great fighters and good eaters, they all bite readily on gizzard and threadfin shad. These small baitfish can be hard to catch and are notoriously hard to keep alive once you've caught them. Enter the bait tank, or shad tank as they're often called.

Basically, these tanks, which are usually insulated plastic "tubs," help keep shad alive by providing oxygen-rich water that is circulated through some type of pump.

By Nels Rodefeld

"Sunshine" George Lening, makes around 100 tanks a year at a shop at his home in Mead, near the banks of Lake Texoma. The tanks, which range in size from 19 to 63 gallons, cost from \$350 for a basic model to \$495 for the largest sized tank complete with an oxygen enhancer and spray ring.

Lening has his own manufacturing equipment and can make just about any size tank an angler would need. He also produces cleaning

A REALLY GOOD THEORY?

George "Sunshine" Lening, one of the "six old geezers," spends some 275 days a year on Lake Texoma. He says he and the geezers try to fish as much as they can, sometimes for as little as 45 minutes, because you never really know what day is going to be good. In fact, Lening espouses the theory that in any given month, there will be four really good days for hunting or fishing. The weather may be the same on these days as it is on others, but for some reason, he said, nature comes alive on these magic days.

"These are the times when you see five bucks in a morning," he said, "I haven't been able to figure out how to predict 'em, so we just go as often as we can so we don't miss any."

George Lening makes bait tanks for the serious angler. He ought to know what they need, he spends about 275 days fishing on Lake Texoma each year.

tables and rod holders. You can check out www.baittanksbysunshine.com or call him directly at (580) 920-2085 for more information.

"About five years ago I read an article about welding plastic," Lening said. "My first vocation was (steel) welding and I thought, 'Gee, how do they weld plastic.' I called and got some information on it and decided to make myself a bait tank.

"Being a fisherperson and guide, I understand the problems with bait. I take a lot of pride in what I do and think I have a good product."

The tanks Sunshine now makes are "cast" plastic, meaning they don't have any seams or welds. And despite being recognized as some of the top tanks around, Lening can't help but tinker to improve them.

"I'm a frustrated inventor," he said. "I reinvent the wheel every other day."

Born and raised in Guymon, Lening owned a business in California that he left to start a guide service.

"When the pollution started getting bad, I decided to look for better waters," he said. "I looked all over the country and decided on Lake Texoma because it's such an incredible fishery."