



Fly Fishing Gear 101: Your first fly fishing outfit.

By Hogan Brown

So you want to learn to fish with a fly, but already have a small fortune invested in spinning gear. You've never been fishing before and are just not sure you'll like flinging a fly all day. Don't worry. Quality starter kits including fly rod, fly reel, backing, and fly line can be found almost anywhere. And can be purchased without breaking the bank.

With the growing interest in fly fishing, introductory fly fishing outfits have leapt the bounds of specialty fly fishing shops and can be found in the sporting goods department of stores such as Wal-Mart and Longs Drugs, can be purchased from mail order catalog companies like Cabelas, and on the internet from a plethora of sites. While price is always an issue, a major point to consider when making a purchase is the service and knowledge that your local sporting goods store or fly shop has to offer. Buying locally can plug you into the most useful resource you can find – professional fishermen who fish local rivers and streams.

Fly fishing starter kits range in price from \$60.00 to \$250.00 dollars and are offered by a variety of companies. Some manufacturers, such as Shakespeare, Cabelas, St. Croix, and G Loomis already have brand recognition in the spin fishing community. Many of the specialty fly rod manufacturers, such as Scott Fly Rod Company, Sage, Redington, and Cortland Line Co., just to name a few, also offer introductory starter kits.

When evaluating a particular manufacturer's kit there are several factors to consider. The first factor to consider is the quality of the individual components. In order of importance are the rod, line, and reel. Because the rod and line are such important pieces of equipment we draw the line at the \$100.00 dollar mark. Attractive as less expensive kits may be, the quality of the rod and line components do not facilitate rapid and easy learning. Fly fishing is supposed to be FUN, not frustrating. The next factor to consider is what is included in the kit. A good kit should include a rod, reel, backing, and fly line at a minimum. Premium kits may include a leader, spool of tippet, fly box, and/or instructional video or DVD. You should also consider is whether the kit comes pre-assembled. If you're bad with knots, you should buy a kit that comes pre-assembled or buy locally from a shop that can assemble it for you. The last factor to consider is whether or not the rod comes with a manufacturer's warranty.

The starter kits reviewed for this article are

the St. Croix Rod Premier kits. Taking into consideration the four factors from above, then adding in several years experience working in a fly shop, guiding and checking out client's gear, and more years just plain fishing it's my opinion that St. Croix Rod Premier kits are currently the best starter kits on the market. Although rod length and line weight selection is limited, the Premier kits strike the perfect balance between affordability and quality of components. Each kit includes a St. Croix Premier fly rod, a fly reel with an adjustable drag, a weight forward

floating fly line, backing, tapered leader, and rod sock. It comes pre-assembled, packaged in a plastic tube that doubles as a rod tube and is ready to fish.

Introduced this year, the Premier series rods blow away the competition at the entry level, performing better than many of the more expensive entry level rods from high-end specialty fly rod manufacturers. St. Croix Premier kits are available for rod lengths 8' 6" to 9' in line weights 5, 6, and 8, in both two and four pieces rod sections. The Premier rod series is a moderate-fast action rod perfect for

beginning anglers who are learning to cast. The rods are light and well balanced compared to other entry level rods and are able to generate high line speeds for casting distances and into a head wind while maintaining good tracking and accuracy at all distances. For fishing the foothill streams and creeks of Butte County the 8' 6" 5wt kit is the right choice, for larger water such as the Feather



River, Sacramento River, or Yuba River the 9' 6wt kit would be best. For shad, large-mouth bass, or small jack salmon fishing the 9' 8wt kit is recommended.

The fly line

included in the kit is a St. Croix is a correctly tapered weight forward floating line. The weight forward line loads the rod quickly giving the beginning angler a better feel for the rod loading and unloading while casting making the learning experience faster and easier. No fancy taper or self lubricating coating, but much better than fly lines included in less expensive kits and as good as or better than fly lines included in more expensive premium kits.

The reel is molded plastic large arbor reel with a semi-adjustable disc drag. Good

enough for most trout fishing, though nothing to write home about. Don't expect the drag to tame an adult steelhead, shad, or anything larger. Although, the rim of the spools is exposed allowing for manual drag to be applied by "palming" the reel. At this stage of the game, however, the reel's most important function is to store the line and it does that well. A small bonus is the fact the reel is a large arbor. That means the center diameter of the spool is larger and will pick-up line faster as it's retrieved. Fly fishing's version of spin fishing's multiplier reel. A feature most other starter kit reels do not include.

St. Croix Rods offers a two-year warranty on the rod against damage due to defective materials or workmanship.

For more information on St. Croix Rods Premier kits or to find a dealer nearest you, contact St. Croix Rods at 800.826.7042 or www.stcroixrods.com.

Now, get out there and go fishing, FLY FISHING!

Hogan Brown works at Fish First!, a full-service fly shop located in downtown Chico. He is an Idylwilde fly company contract fly tyer, the Author What's Hot & What's Not™ Fish First!'s FREE bi-monthly fishing report, and teaches introductory fly fishing classes, on-stream clinics, and fly tying. Hogan guides on the Yuba, Feather, and Lower Sacramento Rivers, local bass ponds, and small foothill streams near Chico. He is a Federation of Fly Fishers certified flycasting instructor. Virtually growing up on banks of the North Fork and Lower Yuba rivers he began fly fishing at an early age. He has chased trout and steelhead in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and in the Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Alberta provinces in Canada. Contact Hogan at Fish First! 167 E. 3rd Street. 530.343.8300. info@fishfirst.

Fly Fishing Techniques For Lake Davis

By Dana Miller

When fishing early in the spring, I prefer an intermediate clear sinking line, a 9' 3 to 6 weight rod, and 4 to 6 pound tippet. Blood midge imitations and wooly buggers are my first choice. Colors on the buggers vary from cinnamon rust to brown, black and green, and colors in between. In most conditions, retrieve slowly and stay deep. Fish the east side of the lake, because that's where most of the spring runoff occurs, and the fish will be near fresh water coming onto the lake. In shallow areas a dry line can be used with a small weighted nymph

and a 10-12 foot leader and remember slow is good.

In June and early July the Damsel hatch occurs and fishing can be amazing. The Damsel will swim towards shore and crawl up on weeds to hatch into its flying form. You can fish from shore and use a dry line with a wet damsel imitation. Often times you can spot fish working an area and cast to them, be cautious as many times you will spook fish that you don't see in real shallow water.

In the fall, October and early November, it's Snail time. Snails release themselves

from the weeds and rocks and float to the surface. I really don't know the purpose of this, but I do know the fish really key in on them! Use a dry or wet line and dead drift a snail pattern with the wind or retrieve very slowly without wind, again slow is the key. Fish the west side of the lake for Damsels and Snails.

Most fly shops and sporting goods dealers can give you up to date information on fly patterns and locations to fish. Also there are many excellent guides in the Quincy-Portola area and are a great way to get started.