

Fresh Water Tropical Fish

Keeping fish can be a great joy for many people. Not only are fish interesting to watch, but it has been documented that watching fish will decrease your stress level! (Now how many pets can you say that about?!) With new technology, keeping fish healthy and the tank looking great is easier than it has ever been before. And the choice of fish is almost endless with new varieties and colors being produced every year.

General Diet: A general good quality freshwater flake or pellet food is a must for your fish's basic diet. The most important thing to remember about feeding fish is that it is very easy to overfeed them and very hard to starve them. Feed only once a day, and give only 4 to 6 flakes or so for each fish.

Vitamins/Supplements: The basic flake or pellet diet includes all the supplements your fish needs. Treats/Extra Foods: Never feed any type of people food! Stick with foods made for freshwater fish. Different types of special fish foods should be offered at least twice a week instead of the basic diet. Variety is important these extra foods can include frozen or freeze-dried brine shrimp, bloodworms, or any other food made especially for your fish.

Housing: The fish tank with hood for cover and lighting, gravel, heater, thermometer, filter, water conditioner, and pH kit are the parts needed to keep a fish healthy. Keep the light on 8-12 hours a day, during the daytime, and off at night. Fish need to sleep just like we do. One inch of gravel at the bottom will provide enough surface area for the good bacteria that help break down some of the fish's waste. A heater will keep the tank at the same temperature all of the time, a necessity in keeping tropical (i.e. warm water) fish. A thermometer should be used to see what the temperature is staying at, which should ideally be 76-78 degrees for most tropical fish. The filter will help remove both solid and chemical waste and keep the water looking clear.

Tap water cannot be used on its own to keep fish, so water conditioner must be added first to remove chemicals like chlorine and heavy metals. Lastly, a pH kit is needed to test and change the pH to neutral, as most tropical fish are comfortable in water that is not too high (alkaline) or low (acidic) in pH.

Sanitation/General Care: Feed fish every day to every other day. It is best, and much less stressful to the fish, to do small water changes more frequently than large ones once in a while. Change approximately 10% of the water once a week and once a month remove one third or so of the tank water by siphoning the water through the gravel with a gravel vacuum. This will keep the good bacteria in the gravel healthy and take out excess solid wastes.

General Maintenance: Filter cartridges that contain charcoal should be changed once a month, as they will not absorb any bad chemicals after this time. Sponge cartridges can be used until they are ratty looking, about 3-4 months, but should be rinsed every month in water that has been dechlorinated first. Good bacteria, besides living on the gravel, also live on the sponge areas of the filter, and chlorine will kill them.

Using water just siphoned out of the tank will work as well for rinsing sponge material. Clean filter and parts such as the impeller at least every 3 months. Algae (which can be green, brown, or red) will grow in the tank sooner or later. Using an aquarium scraper or sponge will work well to clean the algae off the glass and other surfaces of the tank.

Health Care: Fish will catch diseases whenever they become too stressed. Moving from one tank to another, not changing water frequently, overfeeding, and adding too many fish at once can be causes of stress. Add fish slowly, and keep only one inch of fish or so per gallon of tank water. If you take your time and keep to a simple schedule with feeding and water changes, the chances of diseases showing up in your tank will diminish greatly.

Special Section - Choosing fish and decorations: We will be glad to recommend fish for your tank, and you will find there is a great selection! You can choose fish because of their color, shape, size, or interest to you. As for decorating, the choice is up to you. Go all-natural with brown gravel, green plants, and driftwood, or go crazy with fluorescent plants, a castle, and brightly colored gravel! Decorating the tank can be one of the best parts of fish keeping, and there are now many decorations you can choose from!