

Proper feeding of your fish

Tropical fish require a good diet to develop beautiful colors and stay healthy. Flake fish food should be a well-balanced fish food fortified with vitamins and minerals providing fish with the proper nutrition needed for maximum growth and vibrant color. Overfeeding is one of the major causes of fish loss. Overfeeding promotes fish waste (ammonia) to build up to a harmful level. During the first few weeks, feed only once a day. It is best to feed the fish only enough flakes that they can eat in five minutes. If food is seen sitting on the bottom of the aquarium, the fish have been overfed.

How to handle cloudy water and algae

A few days after fish are added to the aquarium, the water may turn cloudy. This is normal and happens to most new aquariums. In a few days, the cloud will disappear as the aquarium becomes established. To eliminate this waiting period products are available to help the aquarium clear cloudy water fast. These products are designed to make all floating particles stick together so they can then be caught in the filter.

Eventually you may begin to see algae grow on the glass or gravel. It may appear brown or green. First, make sure the aquarium light is on no longer than 12 hours each day. Then use an algae scraper to remove algae from the glass. Products are available that can be used to control algae growth and reduce maintenance.

A clean aquarium is a healthy aquarium

Dirty aquariums not only look bad, they are unhealthy for the fish. By following a few simple maintenance steps the aquarium will always look beautiful. The following steps are an ideal regiment for keeping a great looking aquarium.

Monthly: Clean the filter and add new Activated Carbon. Change about 20% of the water. Partial water changes remove excess pollutants and algae-promoting nutrients (phosphate and nitrate). The easiest way to make a partial water change is with a gravel siphon. Gravel siphons remove debris from the gravel while removing unwanted pollutants from the aquarium. Be sure to use a water conditioner to treat the tap water and protect the fish. If necessary, add a pH product to stabilize the pH. Clean the inside of the aquarium with an algae scraper.

Weekly: Weekly test the pH, ammonia, and nitrite levels. Regular water testing is the only way to monitor water quality in the aquarium. The pH level may shift over time and require an adjustment. If the ammonia and nitrite levels are always zero, it means you are properly caring for the aquarium.

Starting a New Aquarium Pamphlet Provided by PIJAC
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STARTING A NEW AQUARIUM

When starting out a new aquarium the first few weeks is always the most challenging. The three most common problems encountered are tap water, too many fish too fast and over feeding. With a little bit of guidance and knowledge these problems are easy to avoid. If you take the time to read and learn the following you will have the basic information necessary to have a successful aquarium.

Determining the correct size aquarium

Choosing the right size aquarium is the customers' first decision. Aquariums are available in many sizes from 5 gallon Bow Fronts to the popular 55-gallon aquarium and larger. A larger aquarium lets them have a greater number of fish and a more diverse variety. The larger volume of water keeps the water chemistry more stable and less likely to have sudden changes.

The Equipment

The four major pieces of equipment are the heater, filter, air pump, and hood (cover & light fixture).

The Heater... Tropical fish require a steady water temperature of 76° to 78°F. Fluctuating water temperature stresses fish, making them more vulnerable to disease. High quality aquarium heaters minimize water temperature fluctuations. The heater wattage required will vary

depending on the size of your aquarium. Ask our pet shop staff for assistance in selecting the correct size heater.

The filter... Another important component of any aquarium is the filter. Aquarium filters remove suspended debris and harmful pollution, and also add oxygen to the water. The larger the filter the less often you will need to perform maintenance. Whenever possible it is always best to select a filter that has a good flow rate and a large area to hold filter media.

The air pump... Air pumps are used for bubbling ornaments, bubble wands, and air stones. When the bubbles agitate the surface of the water, oxygen is added to the water. The addition of an air pump is a great way to assure that the aquarium has adequate water movement.

The hood... An aquarium hood should consist of a cover and a light fixture. The hood looks attractive and helps reduce evaporation of the water. It also reduces the chance of losing fish since it keeps them from jumping out. It is advised to select a hood with a light fixture, to illuminate the aquarium for viewing the fish.

Filling an aquarium with water

Don't ever add fish to any aquarium filled with plain tap water. It could be full of dangerous chemicals that can harm the fish. It is important to be aware that municipal tap water is treated with disinfectants (chlorine and chloramines) that are poisonous to tropical fish. Using a water conditioner instantly neutralizes these chemicals, making tap water safe for fish. In the future when you add

water lost do to evaporation you must always use a water conditioner to make tap water safe for your fish.

Tap water may not have the right pH for tropical fish. Most community fish thrive at a neutral pH of 7.0. A range of 6.8 to 7.2 is acceptable for a community aquarium. If you desire to keep particular species of fish that require a pH level other than 7.0. For example African Cichlids require a pH of 8.2 and some South American species prefer 6.5. Products are available to help set the proper pH fish need.

Electrolytes are essential for the uptake of oxygen and release of carbon dioxide and ammonia through the gills. Without the proper amount of electrolytes fish cannot properly breathe making them more vulnerable to disease. Adding aquarium salt supplies these important electrolytes fish need to help them breathe easier and remain active.

Choosing fish for your aquarium

Now the aquarium is ready for fish. But remember only a few fish at first! It takes time for the aquarium to develop the natural balance required to handle a full tank of fish.

Adding fish to your aquarium

The new fish will be stressed from netting and bagging. The best method to add new fish is to float the unopened bag of fish in the filled aquarium for 10 minutes to allow the fish to adjust to the water temperature. Then, open the bag and gently release the fish into the aquarium. The bag water may contain fish waste (ammonia), so try to avoid adding the bag water to the aquarium. Whenever fish are netted and handled their protective slime coat is rubbed off. When adding fish to any aquarium, be sure to add additional water conditioner to help relieve stress.

Establishing biological filtration

Biological filtration is simply the action of beneficial bacteria in the aquarium consuming fish waste. Fish release urine, ammonia, and solid waste into the aquarium water. This fish waste can build up, especially during the first few weeks of starting a new aquarium. Fortunately, beneficial bacteria, called nitrifying bacteria, convert fish waste (ammonia and nitrite) into harmless nitrate. This process, is called the nitrogen cycle. Nitrifying bacteria create the biological filter in aquariums. Nitrifying bacteria need time to grow and develop. If too many fish are added all at once or if too much food is added, ammonia and nitrite levels will reach poisonous levels. To help start up the biological filter, we suggest adding a beneficial bacteria to help get the biological filter started quickly.

Ammonia and nitrite levels should be tested twice a week after the first fish are added. The levels will rise and fall as the biological filter develops. As the biological filter grows it will convert the ammonia to nitrite (also poisonous), then to nitrate. Once the biological filter is established, ammonia and nitrite will remain at zero levels. It usually takes about four weeks for the biological filter to become established.

As soon as the biological filter is established more fish can be added. Only add a few fish at a time, the nitrifying bacteria in the biological filter will need to multiply to consume the additional fish waste. It is best to add fish to any aquarium gradually, one or two per week. By adding more fish gradually you will have a healthy, fully stocked aquarium.