

## Leveling Your Aquarium

Before any water is added to your aquarium, the tank and stand unit should be leveled. It is particularly annoying to fill your aquarium and find that the water level slopes noticeably from one end of the tank to the other. Place your level on the top rim of the aquarium and level the unit by putting a wooden or metal shim under both feet of the stand at the low end. Never level the aquarium by placing shims between the aquarium and the stand.

## Some Don'ts

- Never put rocks and shale from your garden into an aquarium. They may contain toxic materials that will slowly leach out and kill your fish.
- Never put wooden branches into your aquarium—only driftwood is acceptable.
- Never put coral into a fresh water aquarium—it will change the pH (alkalinity) of the aquarium.
- Coral is used only in salt water (marine) aquariums or aquariums where African Cichlids are kept.
- Never add shells to your aquarium which you have found on the beach. These shells have to be properly treated before they are safe for aquariums.
- Never add metal items to an aquarium. Copper pennies will create enough toxic copper in an aquarium to kill the fish.

## Getting Your Tap Water Ready To Support Fish Life

Now that your tank is filled, turn on your filters, heater and lights. Over the next 24 hours adjust the temperature to 78-82F.

Add chlorine remover to neutralize the free chlorine which is toxic to tropical fish.

Test the pH of your aquarium, and adjust to levels compatible with the fish you are going to collect. Egg laying fish like slightly acid water (pH 6.7 to 6.9) and live bearers like slightly alkaline water (7.1 to 7.3). A neutral pH (7.0) is best for a community tank.

Ask for help at your pet store in selecting fish that are compatible in size and temperament. When you transport your fish from the store, they should be protected from extreme temperatures. When you get home, float the fish bag in your aquarium for no more than 5 minutes until the temperature of the water in the bag is the same as that in the tank. This happens very quickly. You can do serious damage to your fish (lack of oxygen) if you float the bag longer than 5 minutes. Release the fish at one end of the tank and at the same time, add some food at the other end to distract the fish already present. This is done so that the new fish are not mistaken for food and inadvertently attacked.

## Feeding Fish Food

Don't over feed your fish. You should not see a lot of food sinking to the gravel or being caught up in the filter. Feed only as much food as your fish will eat in three minutes of rapid feeding. Feeding small amounts twice a day is a good policy. Always leave the lights on while feeding. Vary the diet using flakes, frozen, live and freeze dried food.

## Finishing Your Aquarium

To give your aquarium a finished look and to enhance the beauty of your fish, you'll want to add plants, whether natural or plastic. If you prefer real plants, you can create a nice effect with small bunches of *Cabomba Myriophyllum* or *Anacharis*.

Besides decorating your aquarium, the plants serve as hiding places for your fish, particularly those species which are known for their timidity. Some fish need some vegetable matter in their diets and utilize plants for this use.

Beginners may wish to consider plastic plants since they do not die. As you progress with your hobby, you can add real plants for a more natural look.

## Finally

This informational pamphlet is not a substitute for a good book. Visit your pet store for a wide selection of books on the responsible care and maintenance of your fish.



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PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
1710 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036  
FUNDING PROVIDED BY:

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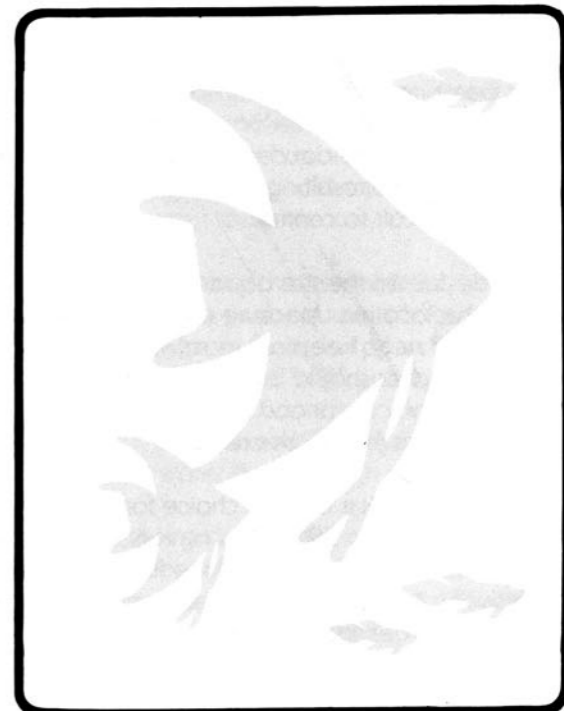
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# SETTING UP AN AQUARIUM



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Prior to buying tropical fish, it is necessary to decide the type and size of aquarium you'll need. Aquariums are most commonly purchased for their natural beauty and therefore are frequently used as a room decoration or a point of interest in almost any location in the house. Once you've decided on a general location, a lot of care should be used in choosing the exact spot for your aquarium. Consider the following:

- Avoid locating the aquarium in a heavily trafficked area where it might be bumped or jarred.
- Avoid heating or air conditioning vents that make the control of water temperature difficult.
- Don't put the aquarium in direct sunlight as the resulting algae growth will be difficult to control.

Next, decide on the size aquarium that you want for the location. Measure the available space accurately keeping in mind that a space of 6 inches should be allowed behind the tank for equipment and at least 10 inches over the tank as free work area.

A 10 gallon tank is a good choice for a first aquarium. A 20 or 29 gallon tank is more easily maintained and displays the fish more impressively. A large tank will permit the fish to grow to a larger size than they would attain in a small tank, and also permits the fish enough room to live peacefully and perhaps, even spawn. A larger tank will provide a more stable environment with less fluctuation in temperature, and acid/alkaline balance, and it is actually easier to maintain than is a smaller tank.

It is also wise at this time to decide on the height and type of aquarium stand. Most stands are almost table top height, but, if you wish, low-boy stands are available as are double stands capable of holding two aquariums.

**CAUTION:** If you decide to use your own table or stand, remember to take into consideration the substantial weight of a finished aquarium. An aquarium weighs about 10 lbs. per gallon, thus, a 30 gallon unit will weigh close to 300 lbs. when completed.

After you have selected the stand, place the aquarium on it. All four corners of the aquarium should be supported by the stand and the tank should not wobble. If in doubt, try to slide a 3 × 5 card under each corner of the tank.

### Aquarium Covers

Aquarium covers or hoods should fit tightly and completely over the top of the aquarium. This cover serves several purposes; it prevents the fish from jumping out; reduces heat loss and water evaporation; keeps out tobacco smoke and other noxious fumes; and serves as a holder for the aquarium lighting system.

### Aquarium Heaters

All aquariums (except those used exclusively for goldfish) require an aquarium heater. Heaters help maintain a constant temperature in the aquarium. Tropical fish require a temperature of 78-82 degrees F.

To help you select the proper size heater for your aquarium, match your tank size with appropriate heater size. If your tank is in a drafty area or an especially cold location, select the next larger size heater. Your pet store will help you ascertain the proper match.

### Aquarium Filtration

All aquariums need filtration. This is so since your fish are living in a closed environment, where water is not permitted to be replenished as it is in the ocean, lakes or streams. There are three types of filtration available for aquarium use: mechanical, chemical and biological.

Mechanical filtration is the simple removal of solid particles such as excess fish food and fish waste. The most popular filter media for mechanical filtration is polyester, usually in the form of floss pads or pre-cut cartridges. Typical units include small box corner filters, power filters, or canister filters which are kept on the floor. Small box corner filters are well suited to smaller aquariums, while power filters and canister filters are more popular for larger aquariums.

Chemical filtration is the removal of *dissolved* contaminants in the aquarium. The most popular filter medium for chemical filtration is a high-grade of activated carbon. Activated carbon comes in a number of particle sizes and fits into all aquarium filters. Activated carbon is a good chemical filter, because it contains thousands of microscopic pores which remove from the water such deadly contaminants as chlorine and toxic gases caused by decomposing plants and wastes. Activated carbon also helps to eliminate the yellowing caused by decaying matter in the tank. It is recommended that activated carbon be used at all times in the filtration system for healthier and livelier fish.

Biological filtration is accomplished by breaking down the toxic waste material from fish excretions and decaying food into simple, nontoxic substances. This is accomplished by two groups of harmless bacteria which live in the gravel bed on the bottom of your aquarium. This active bacterial filter is commonly called a biological filter. Since the bacteria for the filter comes from the intestinal tract of the fish, the only thing that has to be done is to set the stage for the proper development of this biological filter. An under gravel filter promotes the proper aeration and water flow through the gravel.

Your aquarium should have a gravel bed two to three inches deep in order for the proper development of biological filter. Three inches of gravel makes an aquarium easier to decorate and much more attractive. Many colors are available and the selection should blend with your room decor.

Aquarium gravel helps avoid introducing contaminants to your aquarium. You will require slightly more than one pound of gravel per gallon of tank size. A 20 gallon aquarium looks nice with 25 pounds of gravel. *Never use beach sand.* It's too fine and doesn't permit proper water flow through the filter bed.

Wash the gravel thoroughly in a large bucket under cold water by continuously stirring with your hand. Rinse until all of the gravel dust has been washed away. *Never, never use soap or detergent.* It is difficult to rinse completely out of the gravel. Even small amounts will poison your fish. Set the under gravel filter in place and attach the upflow tubes. Put the gravel on top and slope it so that it's higher in the back of the tank than in front. This helps in decorating the tank and also permits debris and excess food to drift forward in the tank where it can be easily removed.