

Caring for your tropical fish

**How to keep pet tropical fish
healthy and happy**



Notcutts

GARDEN INSPIRATION SINCE 1897

Caring for your tropical fish



Are tropical fish right for me?

A tropical fish tank creates a stunning display of colour and life into your home. These pets are very rewarding and interesting too, with many owners feeling the soothing, calming effects of keeping fish at home.

If well looked after, your fish could live for many years. They are relatively easy to maintain which make tropical fish a fantastic first pet for families.

Tropical fish require a regular cleaning routine which is essential to their health and happiness. You will also need to monitor their behaviour and tank condition for any signs of ill health.

Choosing a new pet tropical fish

When selecting your fish, check these signs that they are healthy:

- Actively swimming around the tank
- Gills are expanding regularly
- Healthy appetite, coming to the surface at feeding time
- No white spots or blemishes
- Healthy fins with no tears or ragged edges
- Brightly coloured

Introducing your fish to their new tank

It is important that your fish suffer minimal stress when transitioning from their tank at the pet centre and their new aquarium at home.

Their new aquarium should have been set up and running for a least a week before bringing fish home.

Your new fish could be at risk if your aquarium water isn't just right. We will test your water for free before you buy any fish from us.

Always switch off any tank lighting before introducing new fish and leave the lights off for at least 4 hours or overnight after releasing new fish into the tank. This keeps the fish calm.

1. Take your fish straight home - they should spend as short a time as possible in their plastic bag.
2. Float the fish in their sealed bag in the aquarium for 30 minutes. If you are also adding new plants, make sure this is done before introducing your new fish.
3. After 30 minutes, open the bag and let a little of the aquarium water flow into the bag. Leave for a further 5 minutes.
4. Add a little more of the aquarium water into the bag and after another 5 minutes, gently tilt the bag and allow the fish to swim out.

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5. Always treat the aquarium with a whitespot preventative as a precaution. Stress causes whitespot and new fish are susceptible to this for 24 hours after arriving in their new home.
6. Avoid feeding your new fish on the day they arrive home as they will be getting used to their new environment and will probably not be interested in feeding.

In the unlikely event that you encounter any problems with your new fish, please contact the Notcutts pet centre immediately. Fish are guaranteed against loss for 48 hours provided the above instructions have been followed.

Creating a happy home

Choosing an aquarium

Fish tanks can vary considerably, however, size and surface area are the most important factors to consider.

A general rule of thumb for understanding how many fish your tank can hold is the fish per gallon or litre of water guideline. Typically, there can be two inches of fish per gallon of water.

The safest measurement we recommend is a surface area guide. The surface area of the tank is where the gas exchanges happen that keep your fish alive. A larger surface area means more oxygen in the tank. A tall tank might have more space available but that doesn't mean it can house more fish than a shorter tank with the same surface area.

The rule is for every inch of fish there needs to be 12 square inches of surface area to make sure the tank has enough dissolved oxygen.

Our tank size guide below will help you determine the amount of fish you can have for the size tank you wish to buy.

This is the maximum stocking density of the tank, therefore the fully grown size of the fish you are buying should be used for your calculations.

Fish should be gradually introduced to your tank over a period of months and water quality must be tested on a regular basis.

Tank Size in Inches L H W	Available Surface Area in sq.in.	Maximum Stock-holding of Fish (in inches)
24 x 12 x 12	288	24
24 x 15 x 12	288	24
30 x 12 x 12	360	30
30 x 15 x 12	360	30
30 x 18 x 12	360	30
36 x 15 x 12	432	36
36 x 18 x 12	432	36
48 x 15 x 12	576	48
48 x 18 x 12	576	48
48 x 18 x 15	720	60

Aeration

An aquarium pump will greatly improve the environment for your fish and will increase the number of fish you may safely keep.

Filtration

A filter is essential in all aquariums to remove harmful waste products and toxins.

There are different types of filter available, the two most popular being the under-gravel filter (which is used with an air pump) and the combined internal pump and filter unit.

Both are simple to install and will really enhance the water quality for your fish (and reduce maintenance tasks for you too).

Heating and lighting

A heater is always necessary when keeping tropical fish as they need a constant temperature of around 25°C.

A lighting unit will bring out the colours of your fish and make your fish tank a stunning feature in any room. Lighting will also help the plants in your tank to thrive.

When choosing where to place your fish tank, avoid windowsills and areas in direct sunlight as this will cause algae growth. Always make sure the tank is placed on a sturdy base or stand.

Gravel

A layer of gravel should be used in the bottom of the tank, at least 2 to 3 inches over an under-gravel filter. The greater the depth of gravel, the easier it is to secure

plants. Gravel is also beneficial because it provides an area for essential bacteria to develop which helps to break down uneaten food and waste products into less harmful substances.

Rocks, ornaments and bogwood

Tropical fish need to have places to hide and shelter so a few rocks, ornaments and some bogwood will add interest to the tank display and make your fish feel at home. Please be aware that bogwood can stain aquarium water if it's not properly cleaned and left to soak beforehand.

Plants

Aquatic plants are essential for the aquarium, they provide shelter for the fish as well as being a source of food. They also produce oxygen and most important of all, live plants feed off harmful nitrates, helping to keep the water clean and fresh. Most live plants will thrive better in tanks established for over 3 months.



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Setting up the tank

1. Wash out the tank with an aquarium disinfectant to remove any dirt and dust. Place the tank on a layer of polystyrene tiles (if required, check manufacturer's instructions).
2. Wash the gravel thoroughly by rinsing it through several times. Place at the bottom of the tank to a depth of 3 inches at the back sloping down to around 2 inches at the front.
3. Fill the tank three quarters full with tap water.
4. Place wood, rocks, plants and the filter in the tank. Fill the rest of the tank with tap water.
5. Add a dechlorinating agent, stirring well to make sure that it is evenly distributed.
6. After a few minutes add a bacterial agent to the water, this will speed the process of maturing the water. The dechlorinator must be added to the water before adding the bacterial agent because chlorine prevents the bacterial agent from working.
7. Allow the aquarium to settle for at least seven to ten days with the filter and heater running before adding fish. Notcutts will offer a free initial water test to check the water condition is suitable for fish to be added.
8. Refer to our instructions on introducing new fish to their tank.
9. We recommend adding up to 10% of your maximum stocking density as an initial introduction. After 4 to 6 weeks your filters will have had time to mature and you can add further fish provided your water condition is suitable.

Keeping the tank clean

Once the tank is established, change at least 20% of the water every month using a gravel cleaner.

Before adding fresh tap water, allow it to reach room temperature first and add de-chlorinator and bacterial agent.

When cleaning the filter, use water from the tank rather than tap water. This helps keep the essential bacteria. Rinse gently.

Use suitable scrapers, sponges and algae magnets to keep the glass clean.

A healthy diet and treats

Tropical fish should be fed only once or twice a day and should be fed no more than they can eat in a few minutes.

If they are overfed the uneaten food sinks to the bottom of the tank where it will rot and poison the water.

Tropical fish should be fed a varied diet to avoid constipation. This can be achieved by feeding frozen or live foods.

Fish which feed from the bottom of the tank would benefit from pellets or tablets.

Living with other fish

Most tropical fish are social and like to be kept in small groups.

When choosing fish for your aquarium, always check with our pet centre team to find out which fish are suitable for a community tank as some varieties should be kept only with their own species.

Once the tank has been running for a couple of months it is a good idea to buy one or two bottom feeding fish. These help to keep the tank clean and add interest and activity to the bottom of your tank.

Potential health issues with tropical fish

If you experience any losses or your fish look unwell, the first step is to test your water quality. Our Pet Centre team will be happy to test a water sample for you.

Fin Rot

Signs include fins turning white, frayed or blood streaked. This is usually a symptom of stress, overcrowding or poor water quality.

White Spot or Ich

This is one of the most common parasitic problems affecting fish. Very obvious white spots appear all over the fish. It becomes visible when the affected fish produce mucus, in response to the attacking parasites. White Spot spreads and can be fatal to fish if left untreated. It is more likely in aquariums with poor water quality or in fish that are stressed and those recovering from illness.

Swim Bladder

You may see your fish sinking to the bottom of their tank, floating upside down, struggling to balance or swim or showing signs of a bloated belly. There are many causes of Swim Bladder but it is often due to the lack of a varied diet.

Your new pet checklist

- Tank
- Polystyrene tiles (if required)
- Filter
- Heater
- Air pump
- Gravel
- Stones or bogwood ornaments
- Plants
- Food
- De-chlorinator
- Bacterial agent
- Water test kit
- Net
- Scraper
- Gravel cleaner



Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



Share your experiences of your new pet with us on social media.



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