

# FISH



Beautiful, calming, exciting, challenging; there are as many reasons for keeping an Aquarium as there are fish and plant life species to put in them! Whether your goal is a special theme or a very natural look, building an aquarium can be a very rewarding hobby!

## **Gravel:**

A gravel floor is the base for most aquariums and there are several types from which to choose. If your taste runs to colored gravel, rinse it well before adding it to the tank to remove excess dye and dust. If you use natural material, check to see that it does not have excessively sharp edges that can cut your fish and other animals. Also consider the size of the gravel. Many fish feed from the aquarium floor and can ingest small size gravel or stones. Larger diameter rock will decrease this risk.

## **Stone/Rock/Rock Shelves**

Many fish, such as African cichlids, prefer a rocky environment, but by nature they dig and can be destructive. When using stone or stone formations, buy smooth stone and secure all stacked rocks by "gluing" them with silicone aquarium sealant. This will keep your rock formations, platforms and walls from tumbling over if the fish get active. There are some very convincing rock formations made from lightweight plastic and are an alternative to using multiple heavy rocks. These are a good solution for smaller tanks with limited size. Attach these to the aquarium floor with sealant or bury the bases in a few inches of gravel.

## **Driftwood and Naturally Collected Material**

Natural moss covered rock, driftwood and plants can lend a beautiful natural appearance to your tank, but it can also introduce some unwanted life forms. Algae, snails, insects and parasites are all potential problems. It is often difficult to clean or sterilize wood, especially if it is covered with algae. Leaving wood specimens out in the sun for 3 to 5 days is often helpful. Another method is "solarizing." Once dry, place your specimens in a clear plastic bag and leave them in direct sunlight for 5 to 7 days. The intense heat generated will "solar sterilize" them. Rocks can be placed in a solution of bleach water. One ounce of bleach in a gallon of water is usually sufficient to clean any hard, non-porous surface. Don't use this method for wood. The bleach will be absorbed into the pores of the wood and may be released back into your aquarium.

## **Seashells**

Seashells can be obtained as natural or decorative accessories. Decorative seashells are often painted or have glitter applied. *Check to make sure these shells are colorfast.* If you are adding shells to a fresh water aquarium, you will have to limit the number you use, because seashells are made primarily from calcium. Adding them to the water acts as a source of calcium and can affect the water hardness and pH. Adding shells to the saltwater aquarium is no problem as long as they are clean.

## **Electricity**

Pumps, filters, heaters and light fixtures all need to be plugged into an electrical outlet. For safety reasons, it is best to purchase a strip-type outlet for all these accessories and place it in an area where it will not be exposed to any water that may overflow or bubble from the tank. If you have a saltwater tank, this is especially important as saltwater conducts electricity faster than fresh water. If water gets into an electrical outlet, a fire can result. Make sure heaters are properly sealed and light fixtures are protected by glass. If you suspect any trouble with your equipment, unplug it from the outlet or turn off the whole strip. Never place your hands into the water if you suspect an electrical problem.

## **Aquarium fish can be separated into 3 categories:**

### **Cold water**

Cold water tanks do not need to be heated, making these the tanks the easiest starter tanks. Goldfish are the most popular cold water fish people keep. Today you can find so many different colours and shapes of Gold Fish that it is possible to have a very colorful and varied population for your first tank.

### **Tropical**

There are literally thousands of types of tropical fish, of many different shapes, sizes, colours and personalities, making this type of fish a super choice for a first aquarium... although some species need to be kept on their own. It may be best to begin by developing a "community tank" with several different species living together. It is important to remember that tropical fish will need warm water, so your aquarium must include a water heater. Make sure you have all the information you need before you start your new tank.

### **Marine**

Marine fish are extremely sensitive to their environment, and because of this, require more care and attention than Tropical or Cold water fish. A marine tank is not a good choice of starter tank. Varied and beautiful, this type of tank makes a perfect complement to the experienced aquarium owner.



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