

## Basic Aquarium Plant Care

Most people who purchase an aquarium do so for it's visual appeal. People are known to spend more money on decorating their tanks than the fish and tank itself. It's a good idea when purchasing these decorative pieces that you consider buying pieces that are both gratifying to the eye, but also useful tools for the balance and maintenance of your tank.

Before resorting to plastic green pieces stuck into the gravel, consider using live plants. Aquatic plants are functional in many ways. Most importantly, the live plants will add oxygen to the water and will help to maintain the water chemistry. They also serve as a place where beneficial bacteria can colonize. This bacteria is essential to have and helps in breaking down waste products in the tank. Overall, the use of live plants aids keeping your aquarium clean and healthy while adding a perfect visual effect.

Once the decision to use live plants is made, you must familiarize yourself with how to grow and care for these plants. The key to growing healthy live plants is the balance between lighting and nutrients within the tank. It is best to use more lighting than what is included with standard hoods. The one bulb that comes with a hood is not enough to promote healthy plant growth. When adding extra lighting, be sure to compensate that with a nutrient supplement to stimulate plant growth and at the same time reduce the chance of algae build up. Algae eating fish will make a great addition. They will keep algae levels low and will not damage the live plants.

The decision to use live plants should be a primary one and steps need to be taken to prepare the tank for later use. It is suggested to add all your plants in the beginning and let them become established. By doing this, you will eliminate the chances algae utilizing the nutrients added and the extra lighting. Quick growing plants are recommended as well as some floating plants. Certain types of fish, such as a catfish, like to seek cover from direct light. The floating plants will provide this escape for the fish and will add a pleasing effect to the design and decoration of the aquarium.

Once your plants are established and growing well, add the fish of your choice and enjoy a beautiful tank. While keeping live plants in the tank, it is important to care for them as you would any other plant. Always remove decaying leaves as they tend to drain the nutrients out of the healthy parts of the plant. Dying roots will rot beneath the gravel. Be sure to remove any part of the plant that is dying or appears diseased. Many plants that are seeded into the gravel will reproduce. The new plant growth can be removed and planted in another part of the aquarium. If you are using a live plant that is primarily a

stem plant, try to remove the lower leaves. These low leaves tend to not get the amount of light needed to remain healthy.

The use of live plants will definitely help in creating a masterpiece aquarium that is pleasing to the eye and is a happy and healthy environment for your fish. Always remember to clean your aquarium on a regular basis and inspect plants weekly for decay. Scheduled maintenance is the key to keeping a beautiful and healthy aquarium.