

## Creating the Perfect Reef Aquarium

Just as nature above the sea level is as variable as the sun, from the deserts of Arizona to the snow topped caps of the Swiss Alps, so can the world under the sea be a constant study in contrasts, with no two reefs the same. This is good news for the underwater enthusiast who is attempting to establish the perfect reef aquarium in their home; there is no established "formula" for the perfect tank. There's plenty of room for creativity!

One thing that cannot be shirked upon is the size of a tank. It must be more than adequate to allow the species of fish that are chosen to inhabit it plenty of room to exercise and grow. Just as a person cannot thrive in an enclosed environment, neither can a fish. A 75 gallon tank is a generous size for the home marine biologist to establish their own eco-system and allows for space for several species of fish to spread out (provided they are compatible species, of course. Putting two species together who are unsuited to tank life together is a recipe for disaster, regardless of the size of the tank).

Courtesy of advances in the convenience of establishing a home aquarium it is now possible to purchase an aquarium that has been pre-drilled in order to prevent overflow. This provides a cleaner look than the traditional "hang on the back" overflow system for the home professional who is attempting to create the picture perfect reef aquarium.

There are many options for decorating a reef aquarium, although it is generally much more aesthetically pleasing and healthy to the fish to keep all of the decorations one hundred percent organic. Live rock is a vital element to any eco-system, yet makes a lovely addition to a home saltwater aquarium. The microorganisms which grow on the rock (the rock is not really alive, obviously; it gets its name from the fact that it is a natural habitat for many species of bacteria) will help to filter out the harmful waste products produced by the fish that will accumulate in the water of a saltwater aquarium in spite of the filtering system-after all, how often does Mother Nature need to clean her saltwater aquarium? She has created the perfect filtering system as long as man does not add any elements to throw off the balance.

Live plants and coral are also essential elements to the perfect reef aquarium. There are many different types of plants which can be added to a reef aquarium, and it is best to choose based on the species of fish which will be inhabiting the tank. For successful transplantation of live aquarium plants it is essential that the sand or silt on the bottom of the tank be deep enough to allow the roots of the plants to successfully take hold. These plants will also require additional light and carbon dioxide to allow for proper photosynthesis.

There are many options for creating the perfect saltwater aquarium, many of them very costly; however, with the proper mix of imagination and frugality it is possible to create a reef aquarium that is aesthetically, ecologically and financially friendly.