

Aquarium Fish Care- All About Start Up

Okay so you have decided that you want to own a fish tank. Great! All you need to do is go to the pet store and pick out a tank and the prettiest fish in the store, and you are ready to go right? Wrong! Starting up an aquarium is a process. It takes time and a lot of patience. If you are a beginner, it is recommended that you start out with some hardy freshwater fish, but don't buy the fish just yet. You need to set up the aquarium first. Most aquarium retailers will sell an aquarium in the form of a kit. This takes the guess work out of purchasing.

In order to get your tank ready, first rinse out the tank with clean tap water. Rinse the gravel and any substrate as well. If you are using an under gravel filter, place it in the bottom of the tank. Next cover the filter with approximately two to three inches of gravel. Fill the tank about a third of the way full with water that has been de-chlorinated. The next step is to add any plants or decorations to the tank. Check with your retailer on the specifics for adding live plants. Some live plants need to be anchored, while others can be left free floating. Next connect the air pump and filtration system, and fill the tank the rest of the way. Lastly put the lid on the tank and let it cycle for one to two days before adding any fish to the tank.

Watch the tank for cloudiness and check the temperature and P.H. of the water. If all is clear you may add a few hardy fish. It is important to choose fish that can withstand high levels of nitrites and ammonia, because these levels are always high in a new tank due to the nitrogen cycle. Debris in the tank from fish excretions help to generate the good bacteria that is needed in order for the fish to survive. Since there are currently no fish in the tank this will take some time. It usually takes about four to six weeks.

Once you have purchased your fish, let them float on the surface of the tank in the bag for about fifteen minutes. The purpose of this is to allow the fish to become acclimated to the water temperature in the aquarium. Carefully add the fish into the aquarium using a net and a bucket. Don't pour the water from the bag into the aquarium. The water from the bag could throw off your perfectly regulated water, as well as introduce new bacteria to the aquarium. Watch the fish carefully for signs of stress. Stress causes illness in fish. Monitor their activity levels. Inactive fish or fish hanging out near the surface of the aquarium indicates stress. There is a stress coat that can be used, if symptoms of stress do appear. Wait anywhere from a week to a month before introducing any new fish to the aquarium, allowing the existing fish to become acclimated to their new environment.