

Care of Live Aquarium Plants

To add that special effect and enhance the natural setting within your aquarium, try using live plants instead of fake plastic plants. The use of live plants will not only add a pleasing visual appeal, but will also help maintain your tank. By adding oxygen to the water, the use of live plants helps keep your aquarium balanced and will aid in fish health.

The most important factor in growing and maintaining healthy aquarium plants is the lighting used. For a well planted aquarium, it is suggested to use 2-3 watts per gallon of water. The use of fluorescent bulbs is practical and adds a nice lighting effect. Take caution when deciding to use florescent lights if your tank has a depth of 20" or more. The low growing plants, or plants with multiple leave levels will suffer from a lack of light as the florescent rays will not provide enough light.

Once you have figured out what type of lighting you will use, you must turn your attention to the hardness of the water. The majority of aquarium plants will thrive in water that has a hardness between 4-12 dH, and between the range of 6.5-7.2 for pH. Plants need clean and clear water to survive best in, so proper cleaning and maintenance should be performed on the aquarium. Most plants will not survive if there is too much debris or waste in the water, so keeping up with cleaning is essential.

Once your plants are established in a clean, well lighted tank, you must care for them by making sure they receive the nutrients required for healthy growth. Plants need both macro- and micro nutrients. Macro nutrients are usually found naturally in tap water and in the fish themselves. These nutrients include nitrates, sulfates and phosphates. Macro nutrients should never need to be added to the water of the tank. They exist on their own. Micro nutrients are needed in very small amounts. Copper, iron and zinc are among the micro nutrients live plants will need to survive in the aquarium.

Generally, the water and the fish in the tank will provide the nutrients and fertilizers needed for plant growth. It is rare that any supplements will need to be added. One important factor in having healthy plant life is your filtration system. Stay away from under gravel filters because they produce a steady flow of bubbles that disturb the surface. The filter plate on under gravel filters also limit's the composition of the gravel in which the plants are rooted. All other kinds of filtration systems will work well. The only things to be concerned about are if your filter causes too much disruption to the water surface. When this happens, carbon dioxide is lost and plants will suffer. Also make sure the filter creates a current that keeps nutrients moving

throughout the tank.

By having a good chemical balance in the aquarium and having an efficient filtering system, you will be sure to have healthy live plant growth. These plants will add to the beauty of the tank and will also keep your fish relaxed because it will be a natural setting for them. If you are considering adding plants for decoration within the aquarium, consider the great benefits of using live plants.