

Aquatic Turtle



Various species

Aquatic turtles come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from the tiny 5 inch male Cagle's map turtle to the 30 inch Yangtze giant soft shell turtle. The most common one's available in the pet trade (which we'll focus on here) range from 6 to 14 inches and live between 15 and 25 years.

Housing

Size

An appropriately sized fish tank is the recommended choice of enclosure for an aquatic turtle. The products available make that type of set up highly customizable. The tank should be large enough to accommodate a basking location big enough for the turtle to completely exit the water as well as contain enough water for the turtle to swim in (at least as deep as the width of the turtle). Baby turtles may need a more shallow swimming area initially.

Substrate

You can use aquarium sand or gravel, or you can choose to have no substrate at all. Having no substrate will likely result in an accumulation of visible waste but may make it easier for your filter to remove. Sand is usually the best choice for species that will burrow, like soft shell turtles. Gravel is great at hiding waste and it looks nice also. If you choose gravel be sure to choose a size that is either too large for your turtle to consume or small enough that you're certain the turtle can pass it.

Filtration

Turtles produce a lot of waste, so unless you want to be cleaning the tank by hand frequently filtration is a must. In most circumstances the traditional hang-over-the-back style filters will not be adequate for a turtle tank (unless you have the type of turtle tank designed to utilize that type of filter). An internal, submersible filter can do the job, but a canister filter is recommended for the best results.



Some products to look for

- Zoo Med Turtle Dock
- Zilla Basking Platform Filter
- API Turtle Sludge Destroyer
- Tetrafauna Turtle Vita Shell
- Zoo Med Dr. Turtle
- Tetra ReptoMin Baby
- Zoo Med Red Shrimp
- Reptology Turtle Topper
- Cascade Internal Filter



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Lighting

Turtles require a source of UVB light in order to produce vitamin D3. Vitamin D3 helps turtles utilize calcium for proper growth and shell/skeletal development. Without a proper source of UVB your turtle will not grow and develop properly. It may have stunted growth and shell abnormalities, or even develop metabolic bone disease. UVB lights come in two styles: tubular or compact; both are viable options. It's just a matter of picking which style suits your set up the best.

Temperature

Both land and water temperatures are important for aquatic turtles. To maintain water temperature, a durable, fully submersible heater is recommended. A turtle can be rough on the contents in its tank, so you'll want to make sure you have a heater that can stand up to the abuse. A water temperature between 72°F and 77°F is ideal. To heat the land area of the tank a heat lamp is recommended. The lamp should be placed above the land side of the tank (or basking platform) and an appropriate wattage bulb should be selected to maintain a temperature around 90°F. The cool side of the tank (opposite the heat lamp) should be around 80°F. The heat lamp can be turned off at night in order to give the turtle cooler night time temperatures as long as the temperature doesn't drop below 70°F. If a night time temperature above 70°F can't be maintained without a heat lamp, the appropriate night bulb should be selected.

Diet

Live Food

Turtles can have a variety of live food including, but not limited to, crickets, mealworms, and feeder fish. Insect food items should be gutloaded before feeding.

Plants

Turtles love to eat plants. Dark leafy greens from your local grocery store make a nice treat for your turtle. Aquatic plants make a great source of food as well as serving as an attractive decoration. *Anacharis (Elodea)* is a good choice, especially for baby turtles.

Pellets

A good quality pelleted food designed specifically for aquatic turtles should make up the bulk of your turtles diet. The pellets should be appropriately sized for your turtle. You should only feed as much as your turtle can eat in 15 to 20 minutes. Baby turtles should be fed every day, where as juveniles may be fed every other day. Adults may be fed every third day. Take care not to over feed your turtle.



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