Caring for Your Fish

Buying Fish

Don't put too many fish in your aquarium. You do not want to overcrowd them. The general rule is one, one-inch of fish per gallon of water that you put into the tank. About 16 fish will be happy and comfortable in a 20-gallon tank with several plants and decorations.

Add two fish every two weeks to your tank. This gives the good bacteria time to grow in the tank. Your tank needs good bacteria to protect your fish from harmful waste.

Ask the pet store clerk if the fish you choose will all live together peacefully. Some fish are considered aggressive and will cause trouble in a tank with other fish. For suggestions see our Real Aquariums page.

Coming Home

Your new fish will come home in a bag with water that is a different temperature and quality than the water in your tank. You will need to float the bag of fish in your tank to make sure that your fish adjust to their new home. Leave the bag floating for at least 20 minutes so that the temperature of the water in the bag reaches the same temperature as the water in your tank.

Use a small fine mesh net to transfer the fish from the bag to the tank, and avoid spilling water from the bag into the tank.

Feeding Your New Friends

Give your fish food that is specially made for them. Ask the pet store clerk for help in choosing the right food for your fish.

Don't give too much food because uneaten food will make the tank water poisonous. Feed your fish only a small pinch of food every morning and evening. If the food is not completely eaten in two minutes then you are feeding them too much.

Healthful Water

Use water conditioner whenever you add new water to the tank, and change-out some of the water monthly or when it looks cloudy to keep the tank clean.

Depending on the kind of fish, the water may need to be tested for pH, ammonia and nitrites. Your pet store may offer a service to test the water if you bring in a small sample or you may purchase a test kit which comes with instructions to test the water at home.

Suggested Care

Everyday:

- Feed the fish twice a day. Watch your fish swim and check their physical condition.

- Turn the tank lights on for about 10 hours per day.

On the first weekend of each month:

- Clean the tank's glass on the inside using an algae scraper.

- Vacuum the gravel in the tank with a siphon hose until 1/4 of the water has been removed; add water conditioner to your tap water and then refill the tank.