



Choosing your fish

Categories of Tropical Fish

There are literally thousands of species and varieties to choose from for stocking your tank. Freshwater Tropicals need an aquarium heater, typically set at a temperature of 22 – 26°C.

Some of the main groups of Tropicals include:


- General Community Tropical fish – these fish are generally peaceful and easy to keep, water best kept around neutral pH
- African Cichlids – Bright colourful fish, but can be aggressive, so provide plenty of rocky hiding places. They require a higher pH and general hardness.
- South American Cichlids – Beautiful fish, some can grow quite large and be aggressive, whereas dwarf species should be kept with small fishes such as tetras. Generally prefer soft acid water
- Miscellaneous species - Various types which have an interesting appearance or are just unusual. Required water conditions can vary.
- Tank busters – large species (mainly Cichlids) that grow to a very large size. These are usually aggressive and highly predatory species. Many prefer neutral to high pH and moderately hard water. Also suitable as a singly kept “pet fish”.

- Natives – originate from Australia. Best kept around neutral pH. Species such as Rainbowfish make great additions to general community tanks.

Compatibility of fish

Care needs to be taken when selecting your fish as not all types will live together and be compatible. Compatibility is based on a range of different factors. Different species of fish occupy different levels of water and the tank can generally be divided into bottom dwellers for species like catfish and loaches, midwater species(eg Barbs and Tetras) and top-swimmers such as Guppies and Panchax. If you already have bottom dwellers like catfish, you might want to add a top dweller or midwater species to provide movement and interest at all levels of the aquarium.

Each species also have specific temperaments (aggressive or peaceful, schooling or solitary), and may be either nocturnal or diurnal (active during the day). When choosing tank mates be sure they have similar temperaments - do not mix aggressive and peaceful species together. Many of the smaller species need to be kept in small schools of 5 or more fish; this is their natural behaviour, when schooling fish are kept individually they are not as happy. However, other species may prefer to be kept in pairs or even singly in tanks. Also the size of fish is important – in nature big fish eat little fish and this will also happen in your tank. Even peaceful species may eat fish much smaller than themselves if the opportunity occurs.

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