

# Which Fish Tank?

**Your Comprehensive Guide to Selecting and  
Maintaining Your Home Aquarium**

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### **Which Fish Tank?**

For people who own home aquariums, fishkeeping is more than just a hobby. It's a way of life. A home aquarium can be the centerpiece for your living room or other location. You can design it and artfully arrange it any way you like. And the soothing sound of the bubbles combined with the gentle progression of your fish can be almost hypnotically relaxing.

Why do you think aquariums are often found in the waiting rooms of doctor's and dentist's offices? They put people at ease, relieve anxiety and allow them to momentarily escape into the underwater landscape of art in motion.

Keeping colorful, vibrant fish as pets is much less stressful than any other type of animal. Unlike dogs or cats, they don't make demands on your attention, won't leave "accidents" in your home when you are out, and can never potentially cause harm to your children or guests.

Once your aquarium is set up, it requires very little daily maintenance. Fish food is inexpensive and fish typically only eat once or twice per day. And stocking your aquarium with exotic tropical fish from all over globe is far more affordable than purchasing a larger animal. In many cases, you can purchase new fish for your tank for just pennies.

So if you are considering fishkeeping as a hobby, the only question that remains is ... Which fish tank?

### **Fish Keeping: A Healthy Hobby**

Can fishkeeping make you feel better? Some studies indicate that it can.

Watching colorful fish swim around in an artfully designed aquarium is like watching a moving painting. Colors and movement – along with the relaxing sound of tiny bubbles breaking the water's surface – is relaxing. It can soothe the nerves, relieve anxiety and even help release tension in the muscles.

### **Why Fish Keeping Is Good for You**

Fishkeeping can actually improve your health. Watching fish swim in an aquarium has been linked to health benefits for people with high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety disorders and even Alzheimer's disease.

In one study, elderly people suffering from high blood pressure were given an aquarium filled with colorful, entrancing fish. The result was a substantial reduction in blood pressure.

Aquariums have also been used as a therapy method for hyperactive children. And in another study, people who suffered from nervousness about going to the dentist's office were separated into two groups: One was given hypnosis therapy and the other was asked to watch an aquarium. The aquarium group reported having the same or better relaxation benefits than the hypnotized subjects.

In fact, other studies involving dentists' offices proved that people who watched an aquarium prior to their appointment required less pain medication. And a study involving Alzheimer's patients showed that those with an aquarium to look at required few supplements, ate more food, and were less likely to show physically aggressive behavior.

Even watching a video tape of fish swimming in an aquarium has been proven to have therapeutic benefits.

## **Benefits of Fish Keeping**

Aquariums are one of the most affordable ways to have household pets and the most convenient. After the initial installation, they don't need a lot of attention, unlike dogs, cats or other animals. And fish are one of the most low-maintenance pets. They eat only once or twice per day, they will never run away, and they usually tend to be quite durable and healthy, so

they don't require expensive visits to the veterinarian's office or medications.

A beautifully decorated aquarium can bring color and life to any room. They come in all shapes and sizes – from the tiny goldfish bowl to a hexagon-shaped vertical aquarium to the standard cubical tank -- so they can fit just about anywhere.

When you install a fish tank in a bedroom, the mild hum of the air filter and the sound of the bubbles can have a soothing effect, making sleep come easier.

### **The Fish Keeping Lifestyle**

You don't need to take fish for a walk. They won't scratch up your furniture or leave stool droppings or urine on your carpets. And they don't shed their fur and cause your house to smell.

In fact, other than feeding them once or twice per day, fish don't require any attention or cause any problems whatsoever. With a competent filtration system, you don't even need to change their water very frequently.

Fish also bring a part of nature into your home, which promotes relaxation. The patterns created by schools of colorful tropical fish as they swim around in your fish tank can bring the natural soothing peacefulness into your living room.

Fish also can be educational, especially for children, who can learn about aquatic life, fish biology, ecosystems and how to care for small animals.

Maintaining an aquarium in your home brings many benefits with very few commitments, making it the perfect option for many people who want pets but don't want the expense and obligations that often come with them.

### **Getting Started: The Essentials**

Fishkeeping is one of the fastest growing hobbies in the world, possibly because it is fun, interesting and relaxing and can bring a lot of beauty and pleasure into your home with very little investment in terms of money or time.

To make the most of your fishkeeping hobby, a little preparation can be beneficial. If you have children, getting them involved in the planning for your first aquarium can be a fun family activity.

The first decision to make is where you would like to place your aquarium. You probably will want to locate it in an area where you can get the most enjoyment out of it. For many people, this is a living room or den. Some people prefer to keep their aquarium in their bedroom, where they can doze off watching their fish swim around in their tank.

While your aquarium can go just about anywhere, some fish are sensitive to direct sunlight and heat sources such as furnace vents or radiators, so try to choose a place away from these.

## **Planning for Your First Aquarium**

Fish tanks come in every imaginable size. Where you choose to locate your aquarium will play a role in which one you choose. If this is your first fish tank, you might consider getting a smaller aquarium until you get used to having fish. You can always increase the size later.

It's a good idea to set a budget before you head off to the pet store. While fishkeeping is one of the most affordable pet options, the bigger the tank you buy, the more equipment you will need, not to mention that you will need to purchase more fish to make it look full.

## **Salt Water or Fresh Water?**

Fish live in nearly every body of water on the planet. Lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and other inland pools usually filled with fresh water. That means it has a much lower saline level than oceans or seas, which are salt water. With some exceptions, fish that live in salt water cannot survive in fresh water, and vice versa.

So one of the first decisions to make is whether you want a fresh water or salt water aquarium. Which one you choose will determine the type of fish you can fill it with. There are many varieties of colorful fish in all

sizes living in both fresh and salt water. But if there is a particular type of fish that you want to keep – such as the colorful clown fish that lives only in salt water or the voracious meat-eating piranhas that live only in fresh water – that may influence your decision.

## **Fish Tank Accessories**

If you are simply keeping the goldfish you won at the local carnival, you probably won't need anything other than a fish bowl to keep this durable fish alive and healthy for months or even years. But if you are planning a more elaborate aquarium with many varieties of colorful, exotic fish, some additional equipment other than the fish tank itself usually is required.

Unless you are planning on keeping your fish tank on a table or dresser, you probably will need a stand. These usually are made of wrought iron or some other weight-bearing material.

Fish eat daily, so fish food is essential. The type you purchase will depend on what varieties of fish you are keeping. Your local pet supply dealer can direct you to the proper fish food for you.

There are no toilets in aquariums, so fish will leave their waste right in the tank. That's why a filtration system is typically required. These are often filled with finely-ground charcoal and are placed at the bottom of the tank beneath the rocks. The filtration system is usually operated by an air pump, which also provides the necessary aeration fish require to stay alive.

A heater is also usually required. Aquarium heaters typically have a built-in thermostat so that they can maintain the water at a steady temperature. You probably also will want some decorations for the tank. They make it look more attractive and also give the fish somewhere to play and hide.

### **Fish Tank Maintenance**

Fish need to be fed once or twice per day. Depending on the efficiency of your filtration system, the water in a fish tank needs to be replaced anywhere from once every 7 to 14 days.

The interior of walls of the tank also need to be periodically cleaned with a cleanser that is non-toxic to your fish. The exterior glass can be kept free of smudges using a household glass cleaner.

### **Fish Keeping Tips**

The life expectancy of a fish varies between species, but typically fish can live anywhere from a few months to a few years. It's important to check your tank daily for dead fish as these need to be removed and disposed of immediately to prevent the water from becoming unhealthy for the remaining fish. It also will prevent the trauma for small children of seeing their fish floating dead in the tank.

Follow the recommended feeding guidelines that come with your fish food. Overfeeding fish can lead to stomach ruptures and death.

## **Purchasing Your Fish Keeping Equipment**

In addition to the basic aquarium equipment, you may eventually want to invest in additional products that will make the care and maintenance of your fish tank easier.

These include siphons and buckets to help drain your tank more efficiently during cleaning, chemicals to regulate the pH levels of the water, lights to illuminate the tank at night or during cloudy days, and a water pump to externally filter the water. If you live in a warm weather climate, you may also need a chiller to keep the water temperature at a pleasant cool temperature for your fish.

### **Online or Pet Supply Store**

Where you buy your fishkeeping supplies depends on a number of different factors. Pet supply stores in your area offer convenience and customer service. You can buy the equipment you need and install it right away. Plus, the helpful store employees can often answer any questions you have, make recommendations and offer advice on how to maximize your fishkeeping experience.

## **Benefits of Buying Online**

Online fishkeeping suppliers often are more affordable than your local pet store. You also have the benefit of comparison shopping, often finding the exact same piece of equipment for substantially less money.

The downside of ordering online is that it is going to take at least a couple of days for your equipment to arrive. Returns are sometimes challenging. And you don't usually get the same level of customer service from a website than you would from a live person.

You probably will want to purchase your live fish from the pet supply store because the traumatic experience of being transported through the mail or delivery system is often fatal for fish.

## **Final Thoughts**

One of the most delightful aspects of fishkeeping is the endless variety of fish you can stock in our aquarium. There is always something new to learn.

Fishkeeping is an exciting and educational hobby, especially if you have children. It teaches responsibility of ownership, how to care for other creatures, and even marine biology.

It is affordable, low maintenance and even has proven health benefits. But most importantly, fishkeeping will provide you and your family with a lifetime of fun and entertainment.