

Top tips for happy healthy tropical fish

1-Water quality-fish excrete a toxin called ammonia from their gills, faeces and urine this is highly toxic to fish and if allowed to reach levels above 0.2mg/L it will kill your fish. Once your filter is mature a bacteria called nitrosomonas will establish itself not only on your filters bio media but also on most surfaces of your aquarium i.e. plastic plants, gravel, rocks this bacteria will break down ammonia (NH₂) into nitrite (NO₂) Nitrite is still very toxic to fish as it inhibits the fish's ability for its blood to carry oxygen. Once nitrite (NO₂) is in your aquarium water another bacteria called Nitrobacter will establish which will break down the Nitrite (NO₂) into Nitrate (NO₃), Nitrate is reasonably safe for most species and will be diluted through weekly water changes try to keep nitrate levels below 40ppm levels over 60ppm will start to stress fish.

2-Correct type of water for the species, fish available on the market today comes from all over the world from Africa to Australia. All these species of fish require different water types for example African cichlids typically require Hard and alkali water whereas cichlids from south America prefer soft and acidic water. If your aquarium water does not match your fish's requirements problems with their health are inevitable. If you would like to keep African cichlids and the water in your area is soft and acidic you can use decoration such as ocean rock which will slowly harden and raise the pH of your water. Alternatively if you would like to keep discus which originate from the Amazon adding peat into your filter and decorating the aquarium with bog wood will help soften and reduce the pH.

3-Correct food- All fish have different dietary needs many fish are fine being fed flake all their lives and will never have any problems however others need their diet supplementing. A typical example of a fish requiring a specific diet are Oscars, they require a varied diet of processed and live food in order to stay in good condition indeed diseases such as 'hole in the head disease' have been linked to not feeding this species the correct diet. African cichlids should not be fed foods such as bloodworm as Malawian bloat can develop which is deadly and incurable. And Discus should be fed a high protein diet. Ensuring that you are feeding your fish the correct food is a sure way of keeping them in a healthy condition.

4-Compatible tank mates- It goes without saying that some fish simply cannot be kept in the same aquarium together, because of differing water requirements i.e. hard or soft acidic or alkaline or because of aggression. For example many of the African Mbuna (rock dwellers) cannot be kept with other more peaceful cichlids simply because of their aggressive nature nor can male Siamese fighting fish be kept with other males or even fish of the same coloration. There are many different fish available and some are best kept in species only aquariums where their exacting needs can be met. If you would like a typical community aquarium with mixed species of fish there are many different beautiful options available such as Danios, Tetras, Gouramis, Corydora all these species will live happily with each other. If you plan on keeping more aggressive species then I would recommend a large aquarium with plenty of places to hide you should also regularly move the decoration around in your aquarium so that a particular fish cannot set up a territory.

5-right size aquarium for the right fish, always do your research before you purchase any fish, although they may look small in the fish shop often they will quickly out grow most typical aquariums typical examples of this are giant Gourami, Oscars and some species of Cichlid.