

Things you need to know about saltwater aquariums.

While saltwater environments often require more work and dedication than their freshwater counterparts, they provide a substantially different appeal. The key to success, as with any pet, is planning ahead. Before you jump into purchasing and filling your saltwater tank, you will need to do extensive research regarding the types of fish you plan on keeping as well as what type of habitat you hope to have. Here are some basics which need to be addressed for a saltwater tank:

-Saltwater habitats:

Saltwater tanks can be found in three basic varieties: Fish only, Fish only with live rock, and reef setups. While fish only environments are the most economic option, there are some clear advantages to incorporating live rock into your tank—namely that they provide a natural filter to the habitat and they are more aesthetically pleasing without upgrading to a full-scale reef environment. If you have the time, money, and dedication for a reef tank setup, it will pay off in the long run. Reef habitats can house many more species and provide a more engaging tank.

Also, starting small or simply may seem like a good option, but after the setup required for any size tank you may soon wish you had started with at least a 35 gallon tank. It is also worth noting that smaller tanks require more frequent tests to maintain appropriate chemical levels in the water and are more susceptible to rapid change.

-Equipment:

Purchasing the right equipment to begin with will save money on replacing fish in the long run. Some pieces of equipment that should accompany your saltwater tank include a heater, protein skimmer, thermometer, and test kits. More complete lists can be found easily and depend on the specifics of your desired tank setup.

-Quarantine Tank:

Quarantine tanks make the transition much easier on your saltwater fish and will prevent the spread of disease to others in your aquarium. It is highly recommended that all fish, under all circumstances, be quarantined before introducing them to your tank. This is not a lengthy process, nor does it require an elaborate setup, but it is in the best interest of your fish and ultimately your wallet.

-Other Tank Accessories:

While all the above items are essential to bear in mind for the success of your saltwater tank, there are a few more things to keep in mind.

A background should be painted or taped to the back of the tank. Painting (always on the outside of the tank) is generally a better option since it won't be damaged by spilled or leaking saltwater. Also, in addition to live rock, sand should be added to the tank. However, you should only use sand designed for aquarium use so that you know it won't be harmful to your fish. Invertebrates, such as sea urchins, starfish, and coral also add depth and color to your saltwater tank and can contribute to the ecosystem. Lastly, aquarium plants can help keep the tank clean, attractive, and more interesting for your fish.

About the Author

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