

A WaterZoo introduction to...

Fishkeeping

It is well known that watching fish is relaxing, reduces stress and can be a pleasurable hobby, for all age groups. According Pet Business World volume 1 issue 3, 60% of fishkeepers did not suffer from stress related problems, those who did not keep fish were twice as likely to suffer high blood pressure, and 33% more non fishkeepers frequently argued with their partner. Unlike many other pets, fish require minimal care and can even be left unattended while on short breaks, additionally, once up and running the costs involved are low with no expensive vets bills. Advances in technology and availability of information make maintaining an aquarium easier and less costly than ever before.

An aquarium can be kept where is it not possible to keep other types of pet, provided there is power close by, and away from sunlight. The WaterZoo guide to positioning your aquarium gives more details.

There is a huge range of fish to choose from, these can be divided into three basic types, coldwater, e.g. Goldfish. Tropical freshwater, that come from lakes and rivers in countries with a warm climate, and tropical marine that come from coral reefs, again in countries with a warm climate. All types require filtration and lighting to maintain them, additionally tropical species require a heater.

While the Goldfish may seem like the obvious choice to start with, they grow large and can be messy, so are only suitable for smaller aquariums when young. For long-term care we would recommend the aquarium to be at least 100 litres capacity, or a pond.

Tropical marine fish are delicate and the equipment required to keep them is more complex, however it is possible to keep these, even if you have not kept fish before. Although extra effort is required to look after them, they can be kept in a small aquarium, but this can be very limiting due to the low stocking level. The WaterZoo introduction to marines gives more details.

Tropical freshwater fish are what many choose to begin with, there are hundreds of species to choose from, many of which are only a few centimetres, so even a small aquarium is suitable. Additionally, there is a huge choice of plants and décor, making it possible to create a mini ecosystem in which the fish will feel at home.

Once you have decided on the type of fish to keep, you will need to choose an aquarium, many come fully equipped, and if you are a beginner this may be a good option. These are better value than buying all the equipment separately, and often include comprehensive instructions to guide you. Go for the largest you can comfortably accommodate, large volumes of water are more stable, and many new fish keepers wish they had started out with a larger aquarium, as it enables them to keep a wider range of fish.

Even if you decide upon a ready equipped aquarium make sure it includes a heater if you wish to keep tropical species. You will also require additional items to keep them happy and healthy. Briefly, these may comprise of, gravel, live or artificial plants, background picture, new aquarium care kit, thermometer, gravel cleaner, algae remover.

While an aquarium is relatively low maintenance, they are not maintenance free. Initially, it will require partial water changes weekly, the addition of a bacterial starter and frequent testing of the water quality. As it becomes more established maintenance can normally be reduced to just a few minutes each week. The WaterZoo guide to maintaining your freshwater aquarium gives more details.

This is guide is only intended as an introduction, other WZ guides cover many topics in greater detail. These can be picked up free in store, or downloaded from our website. Further information can be found on the Internet and in the many publications available.

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Jason Scott, a regular contributor to Practical Fishkeeping magazine, who has over 25 years experience in the hobby, wrote this WaterZoo guide and others in the series.