

How to set up a freshwater aquarium

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Whether this is your first aquarium or a rebirth the excitement is very real. You are creating a new living space.

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Proper placement of the tank is a key element in aquarium success. The ideal spot has very stable environmental conditions. The location needs to be out of direct sunlight, which will help control algae growth and temperature variations.

The location should also be free of drafts from exterior doors, heating or cooling vents and fireplaces. It's best to have the tank to the side of main traffic patterns in the room. Outlets should be accessible and be sure you have comfortable furniture nearby for long hours of observation and enjoyment.

After finding a suitable location and placing your stand, then next step is assembling the tank components. We mentioned in the previous article you need a stand, tank, decorative background, hood, undergravel filter, gravel, heater, thermometer, pump, valve and decorations.

Begin the assembly by rinsing the tank with a bleach and water mixture consisting of one (1) tablespoon of bleach to a gallon of water. This will ensure that the tank is free of bacteria and clean. Rinse the tank



well!

Adhere the decorative background to the outside of the tank and then place the tank on the stand. Install the undergravel filter first. Follow the manufacturers instructions, making sure to use at least two updraft tubes.

Placement of gravel is the next step. You will need approximately two pounds per gallon of pebble size or larger. Rinse the gravel with plain water to get out the dust created in shipping before placing the gravel.

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HOW TO SET UP A FRESHWATER AQUARIUM — Continued From Page 13

Make sure to use a container that has never had any soap or chemicals in it. Spread the gravel evenly over the under gravel filter. It should be three to four inches thick.

Next, hook up the pump and gang valve to the undergravel filter. This will generate air circulation in the updraft tubes. Run the tubing from the pump

to the gang valve, and from the gang valve to the undergravel filter tubes. If you are installing the pump below the water level, a check valve may be a good investment. It will stop the water from siphoning out of the tank, in case of power failure.

The heater and thermometer are the next two items to be installed. **CAUTION!!** Do not plug the heater in until there is water in the tank. The thermometer should be installed according to manufacturers instructions.

Finally, it's time for water! Fill the tank half way to the top with room temperature water. The final goal temperature is 76-80 degrees Fahrenheit. A good way to tell if the water is room temperature is to run it over your fingertips. If it doesn't feel either hot or cold, it's in the right

range. Now that your tank is half full with water, add decorations, then continue filling the tank until water is one inch from the top.

At this point, all that is needed are final adjustments to complete your tank setup.

The air flow in the undergravel filter tubes should be adjusted so that the top of the water is moving in a gentle fashion. This will create flow through the undergravel filter. The heater should be adjusted according to instructions.

Be sure that you monitor your tank temperature for stability for a few hours to make sure your heater is working correctly.

The final step before adding fish is to establish the bacteria bed in your new tank. This is the most important step and one that should not be rushed.

The next issue of *The Printed Pet* will provide suggestions for accomplishing this step, along with recommendations for purchasing your new fish!

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