

Greek Tortoise Habitats, How to Create

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Greek Tortoises have unique housing requirements that are necessary to maintain their health and well-being. The following tips will help you to set up the proper habitat for your tortoise.

Enclosure

Glass aquariums are not recommended for Greek Tortoises, as they do not provide the proper air circulation. Plastic tubs such as garden ponds or wading pools, screened-in enclosures, or turtle tables are the preferred methods of housing.

Turtle tables seem to be the most popular type of housing. They look like upside down bookcases, and they have sunken areas for food and water. You can purchase one or make your own. They typically have a wooden floor and Plexi-glass sides to allow for a large, open living space.

The enclosure must be a minimum of 4 feet long by 2 feet wide by 1-2 feet deep. Greek Tortoises need long, low enclosures to allow them plenty of room to move around.

Greek Tortoises can also be housed outdoors, but, unlike other tortoises, they may actually do better inside unless the climate where you live has a naturally low humidity. However, it is still advisable that you set up an outdoor habitat for days that are dry and warm.

Suitable [substrates](#) include a sand/soil mix, aspen shavings, [coconut fiber](#), grass hay, and compressed recycled paper. These should be used in both indoor and outdoor habitats. Some tortoises will eat the substrate. If your tortoise does, be sure to use something digestible.

Landscaping & Cage Accessories

One corner of the habitat should be set up as a basking area with an incandescent [basking spot lamp](#). If you are using flammable substrate such as grass hay, be sure that there is none in the basking area.

At the opposite side of the enclosure, you should place at least one hide spot. This can be created using rocks, wood, or a plastic container. You can also purchase commercially made shelters. It must be placed away from the basking area so it is cool.

A dish of water should also be put in the habitat to provide a place for both drinking and soaking. The dish must be shallow, with the water coming up no higher than halfway up the tortoise's shell, and it must be placed in a way that

allows your tortoise to get in and out of it easily. Greek Tortoises cannot swim, and they could easily drown in a deeper dish.

Temperature

Like other herps, Greek Tortoises need a temperature gradient throughout the cage that ranges from the high temperatures in the basking area to the cool area where the hide spot is placed. The basking area should be approximately 95°F. The temperature throughout the rest of the enclosure should range from 75° to 85°F. Nighttime temperatures should fall to about 75°F. Use a [thermometer](#) to monitor the temperature.

Temperatures can be maintained using a variety of heat control products. Primary heat sources include [under tank heaters](#) and ceramic emitters. Secondary heat sources, or those used to create "basking areas," can include [incandescent basking bulbs](#), [infrared heat bulbs](#), and Mercury vapor bulbs. The use of hot rocks is not recommended, and all heat sources should be outside the enclosure, either above it or beneath it.

Light

Greek Tortoises need a cycle of 12 to 14 hours of light followed by 10 to 12 hours of darkness. During the daytime, you must use a [full spectrum fluorescent bulb](#) to provide the UVA and UVB light that they require for proper Vitamin D3 synthesis and overall health and development. Infrared bulbs can be used at night, though they are not required.

Mercury vapor lights are also popular for use with Greek Tortoises. They provide UVA and UVB light as well as heat, and can be used in a regular incandescent fixture.

Humidity

Greek Tortoises are a terrestrial species that is native to a dry environment, so they require a relatively low humidity. Regular exposure to high humidity can cause upper respiratory tract infections and other health problems. It's important that you keep humidity levels between 30% and 50%, and monitor them closely with a [hygrometer](#). You can also keep levels low by choosing substrates that don't hold humidity.

Cleaning

You will have to change the water dish and spot clean the habitat daily. Cleaning the entire enclosure must be done regularly, about once every one to two weeks depending on the size and how many tortoises are in it. You can use a 5% bleach solution to do this, but be sure to rinse everything thoroughly to remove all traces of bleach residue. Always wash your hands after handling your tortoise and his habitat accessories or cleaning the enclosure.

Housing More than One Greek Tortoise

Male Greek Tortoises are very territorial, so we recommend that if you are going to house more than one tortoise, you only keep one male per enclosure. Keep in mind that owning more tortoises means that you will need to purchase or make a significantly larger enclosure, and you must provide plenty of hide spots and sightline breaks to allow the tortoises areas to hide or escape from the other tortoises as well.