How to Showcase Your Aquarium Fish

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

LIVING ART: designing your aquarium with fish

Planning a visually striking aquarium begins with an eye for creativity and succeeds with a mind for nature. By following a few stocking principles, it's easy to create a showcase aquarium that thrives as a natural aquascape.

FIRST, think of your aquarium as a living canvas: what fish will be the "background," and which will be the focal points? What species will roam near the bottom of the portrait among the plants and structures, and which will swim in the well-lit open water near the surface?

THEN, think of the location of your masterpiece: is it a snapshot of a rocky African rift lake, or the

A successful aquarium community is a matter of compatibility, behavior, and personal interest. Choose mostly peaceful species, keeping in mind that each may prefer a different diet, swimming area, and activity level. Use this diversity to create a balanced, healthy community that's both interesting to observe and easy to care for.

Schooling fish

Schools create repetition of pattern and color, harmony of movement, and the illusion of several fish acting as one mind. The result is both calming and dramatic. To create this living effect the relative majority of your community should consist of schooling fish of the same species. Mixing color variations of a like species also can have a nice visual effect.

Showcase fish

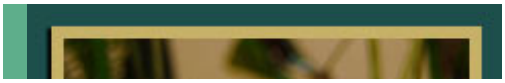
In contrast to a unified backdrop of schooling fish, choose one or two fish that stand out in appearance, behavior, and intelligence. These fish become the "stars" of your community. In nature, these fish may typically prefer solitude over schooling, and tend to be slightly territorial, so be sure to research their compatibility with other fish in your aquarium.

Algae & detritus eating fish & inverts

Sometimes the most interesting aquarium inhabitants are the ones you don't notice until your nose is nearly right up against the glass! These hardy workers patrol the bottom of your aquarium, vacuuming up excess fish food and detritus, helping to keep your tank healthy. So don't forget to put some fish and inverts in your community to work on cleanup duty. These may include algae-eating Plecos, catfish, loaches, or shrimp.

When stocking any aquarium, remember to research the specific requirements for each fish you choose, including water conditions, habitat, compatibility, and diet.

Let selection come naturally



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tea-dark waters of an Amazon riverbank? What mysteries will your aquarium reveal?

In addition to stocking with a creative eye, consider staying "true to nature" by planning out a miniature ecosystem of common structure, inhabitants, and plants that exist together in the wild.

By staying true to the subtle and complex relationships found in regional ecosystems, or biotopes, you'll enjoy the chance to witness the natural behaviors of fish and invertebrates which are at ease in their surroundings. You'll also find it easier to sustain a healthy system by maintaining the ideal water parameters for your biotope of choice, because all the inhabitants of your aquarium share a common temperature zone, pH range, and available diet.

In the end, you'll find that following these simple tips can result in a professional-looking and long established aquarium that entertains and educates for years to come. And as your interest in the hobby grows, you can use these principles to start even more new aquariums, each its own unique window to the natural world.

Q A

Is there an easy way to give my existing aquarium a "fresh" look without having to redo my entire aquarium?

If your current aquarium looks drab, consider introducing a punch of color with a few brightly colored fish. Fish with "hot" colors such as reds, yellows, or oranges, are vibrant and add instant visual interest to any aquarium.

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FEATURED BIOTOPE

south american AMAZON

- **Freshwater**
- **pH 5.8-8.5**
- **Temperature 64º-82ºF**

One of the most popular motifs, this freshwater biotope features some of the most striking fish coloration and behavior. To replicate the dark, tea-stained waters of the Amazon, we recommend Blackwater Extract along with the structure listed below. Rams and Dwarf Cichlids are fussy about water quality, so test and refresh often to ensure their good health.

Structure: EcoComplete Gravel, driftwood, Anubias Nana, Brazilian Sword, Java Fern, Java Moss.

Inhabitants: Tetras, Rams, Dwarf Cichlids, Angels, Plecos, Cory Cats.

Convert fish waste into natural plant food with EcoComplete Gravel.

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