Planted Aquarium Care

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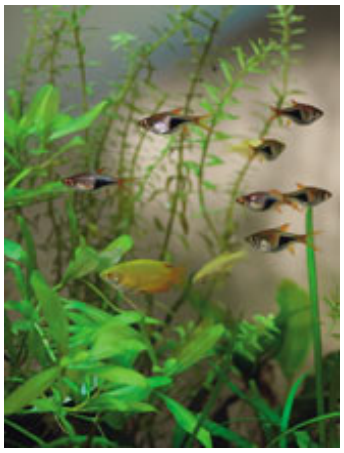
tips for a successful planted aquarium

Featuring live plants in your aquarium not only makes it more attractive, but is much healthier for your aquarium's inhabitants. Live plants provide your fish a natural food source with the ability to replenish.

By far the biggest benefit that live plants provide for your aquarium is that they produce oxygen (O2) and absorb the carbon dioxide (CO2) and ammonia (NH3) that your fish generate. Live plants in your aquarium mimic the natural ecosystem, and may be one of the most beneficial ways to keep your fish healthy.



Plants provide shelter and security for the fish. Because they compete with algae for nutrients, they can help to reduce algae growth. Live plants enhance the appearance and provide a much more natural environment for the fish. By improving water quality and reducing stress, live plants are a great way to improve your fishes' health. Adding live plants, however, does not reduce the need for water changes. When selecting live plants, make sure that you select species that are truly submersible and that are suitable for your specific water type and fish species.

When first beginning to use live plants in your aquarium, it is wise to choose a large amount of hardy species such as plants from the genus Sagittaria, Sword Plants, or Moneywort. Once your aquarium is balanced, you can start including the more sensitive plant species.

Plant Selection & Placement Tips:

- To create a natural-looking garden aquarium, add a broad variety of plant species. The visual effect is lush and beautiful.
- While foreground and background plants help define your composition, don't necessarily place only tall plants in back and short in front. Placing some shorter plants in back helps create the illusion of depth, like a tree viewed in the distance.
- Don't forget the reds! A bold splash of a red against varied shades of green creates a dramatic visual focus. Red varieties of Ludwigia and Rotala make great choices.

Aquascaping Tips

Caring for your maturing planted aquarium is both an art and a science. With the right technique and a creative eye, you too can enjoy the rewards of a beautifully sculpted garden. Here are some tips how:

- Tall stem plants like Rotala Indica will begin to bend over at the surface if not pruned back. While this surface growth is ideal for bubble-nesting gouramis, it also shades the plants below from precious light.
- Advantageous rooting plants can be pruned mid stem and replanted. Simply trim the bottom leaves of the cutting and place back into the substrate, using bendable plant weights if necessary to anchor. Replant with the same grouping for a fuller look, or experiment by interspersing these single cuttings among other established groupings.

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- Sometimes, a young plant that starts out looking fine in one location soon outgrows its space. To thin out, either cut and toss individual leaves or carefully pull out half the cluster by the roots and replant the extra in another location.

Regular pruning of tall background plants and the thinning out of mid- and foreground plants will provide your aquarium with a defined and clean composition. It's the hobbyist's pleasure to watch nature grow wild in this small world we tend to, always pruning, shaping, clipping, and replanting for new roots to take hold.

Other factors that ensure your plant aquarium is the healthiest you can achieve include:

- Full spectrum lighting at least 12 hours per day
- Temperature should be between 75-88° Fahrenheit
- pH between 6.5-7.4
- Five degrees KH (carbonate hardness)
- Eight degrees GH (general hardness)
- CO_2 levels as high as possible, but lower than 40 mg
- Low to zero surface turbulence to help retain CO_2
- 25% water changes every other week
- Appropriate substrate for root growth

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