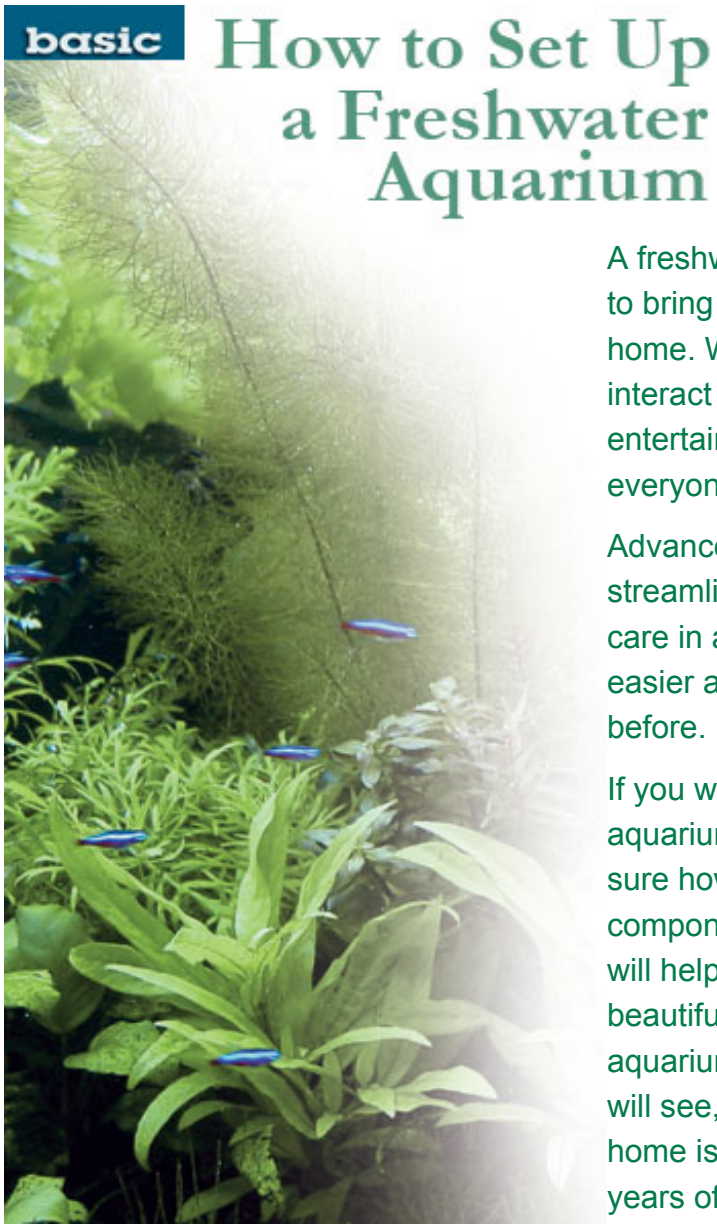
Freshwater Aquariums: How to set up

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



A freshwater aquarium is an ideal way to bring colorful aquatic life into your home. Watching fish swim, feed and interact is not only relaxing; it's also entertaining and educational - for everyone in your home.

Advances in technology have streamlined aquarium equipment and care in a way that makes the hobby easier and more affordable than ever before.

If you would like to add a freshwater aquarium to your home, but aren't sure how to get started, the following component list and step-by-step guide will help you on your way to creating a beautiful attraction like the 55 gallon aquarium setup pictured here. As you will see, adding an aquarium to your home is easy to do and well worth the years of enjoyment you will experience.

You will need...

Suggested equipment:

- 55-gallon aquarium
- Aquarium stand
- Aquarium canopy
- Versa-Top
- 5 bags Natural Gravel
- 200W Visi-Therm Heater

Suggested Aquarium Decorations:

- 4 Mopani Driftwood pieces
- 3 Foreground plants
- 2 Variety Packs
- 3 Marineland 6"-18" Artificial Plant Multi-Packs

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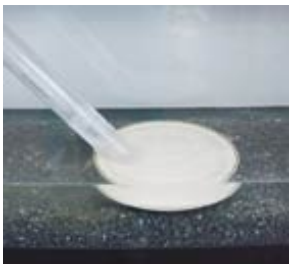
- Vertical Thermometer
- Emperor 400 Filter
- Laborett Deluxe Test Kit
- 16 oz. Neutralize

Step One: Set up Aquarium and Stand

- Place aquarium out of direct sunlight.
- Allow 5" between the wall and the aquarium to accommodate the filter, and ensure the stand is level. Be certain this is a good location for the aquarium, as you will have to completely disassemble the system if you want to move it later.

Step Two: Add Gravel and Water



- Use a plate when adding water to prevent gravel displacement.
- Rinse the gravel in clean water and add it to the aquarium, sloping it up towards the back.
- Place clean plate on top of gravel and start to fill the aquarium with water. If your tap water contains chlorine, add Neutralize.

Step Three: Install Filter and Heater

- Install equipment, but do not plug anything in yet.
- Assemble and hang the power filter on back of aquarium.
- Attach the thermometer in a place that is easy for you to monitor.
- Assemble and install the heater under water level, near input to filter.

Step Four: Decorate

- Add decorations, but leave plenty of swimming room for fish.
- Rinse all the plants with clear water.
- Place all the background plants, arrange the driftwood, add accent and foreground plants, along with a few special stones.
- Fill aquarium and filter with water.
- Plug in filter and heater.
- Wait 24 hours for water temperature to stabilize before adding fish.

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Step Five: Add Fish!

- Add about 10" of fish initially to begin the nitrogen cycle.
- After properly acclimating fish, release them into the aquarium (without adding the water they were shipped in).
- Place canopy and light fixture.
- Wait four weeks and test for ammonia and nitrite. When the levels return to zero, you can begin adding the rest of your fish a few at a time (up to 55 inches total).
- **Suggested Fish:**
  A 55-gallon aquarium can house 55" of fish (adult sizes). We recommend the following:
  - 3-6 Bottom Dwellers
  - 1-3 Algae Eaters
  - Other peaceful community fish include: Danios, Rainbows, Tetras, Barbs, Rasboras, Angels, etc.

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