

## Home aquarium provides dramatic decorating focus

A great way to add to the enjoyment of indoor living is by adding a touch of outdoors. And a home aquarium is the perfect way to bring live outdoor enjoyment and added decor to any indoor living area.

There are many positives to owning a home aquarium. First, it is always a "conversation piece" because of its attractiveness and the beauty of the fish and decorative accessories such as plants and ornaments.

Second, it is a family hobby, great for educating youngsters both in maintaining "life" and in assuming responsibility. Third, new aquarium life support equipment is noiseless and easy to maintain, making a home aquarium even more appealing.

And last, a recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania proved that watching fish in an aquarium is a definite benefit in relieving stress.

How do you get started? First, you will want to locate a good dealer in your area. If you have a friend who has an aquarium, ask for a reference; otherwise the telephone book lists most tropical fish retailers.

During your visit to a tropical fish store, you will want to get some ideas on aquarium sizes and on the equipment you will need, and look over the selection of the fish so that you can choose the ones you will want to keep.

It is advisable to purchase a book that provides complete instructions on setting up and maintaining an aquarium. However, one important rule is to buy the largest aquarium practical since the greater the water environment, the less chance of water problems.

When determining where to put your aquarium, several factors should be considered. You will not want to put it in direct sunlight since this will cause algae to grow on the glass and plastic accessories.

You also may not want to put it on your best carpeting since during water changes it is possible for some water to

splash on the floor. You also should be sure to put your aquarium on a firm stand since water is heavy.

After you have decided on the aquarium, your first accessory will be a tightly fitting canopy cover equipped with a fluorescent fixture. Fluorescent fixtures throw off a cool light and will not cause fluctuations in the water temperature.

While on the subject of water temperature, tropical fish require an environment maintained at around 75°F (25°C). You therefore will need a good heater and an aquarium thermometer.

A recent development in this technology is the liquid crystal digital thermometer which affixes to the outside of the aquarium yet measures most accurately the water temperature.

You will also need a quality filter. Your dealer can give you proper advice since there are several types of filters and your needs will vary with the size of your aquarium. If you are going to keep a lot of fish, you will also want a separate air pump to add oxygen to the water.

Decorating an aquarium is great fun. There are multi-colored gravels, highly decorative backgrounds and hundreds of ornaments, as well as plastic plants so real in reproduction it's almost impossible to distinguish them from live plants. Most good retailers will have a complete assortment and your selection should be based on the size of your aquarium and the amount of money you decide to spend.

Aquarium maintenance is a lot simpler than people think. Every two weeks a partial water change (not greater than 20 percent) by siphoning the water from the bottom of the aquarium is all that is required. A device called the HydroClean allows an efficient siphoning by separating the debris in the gravel and removing it with the water from the aquarium.

On a monthly basis, your filter will require minimal maintenance. That's all there is.

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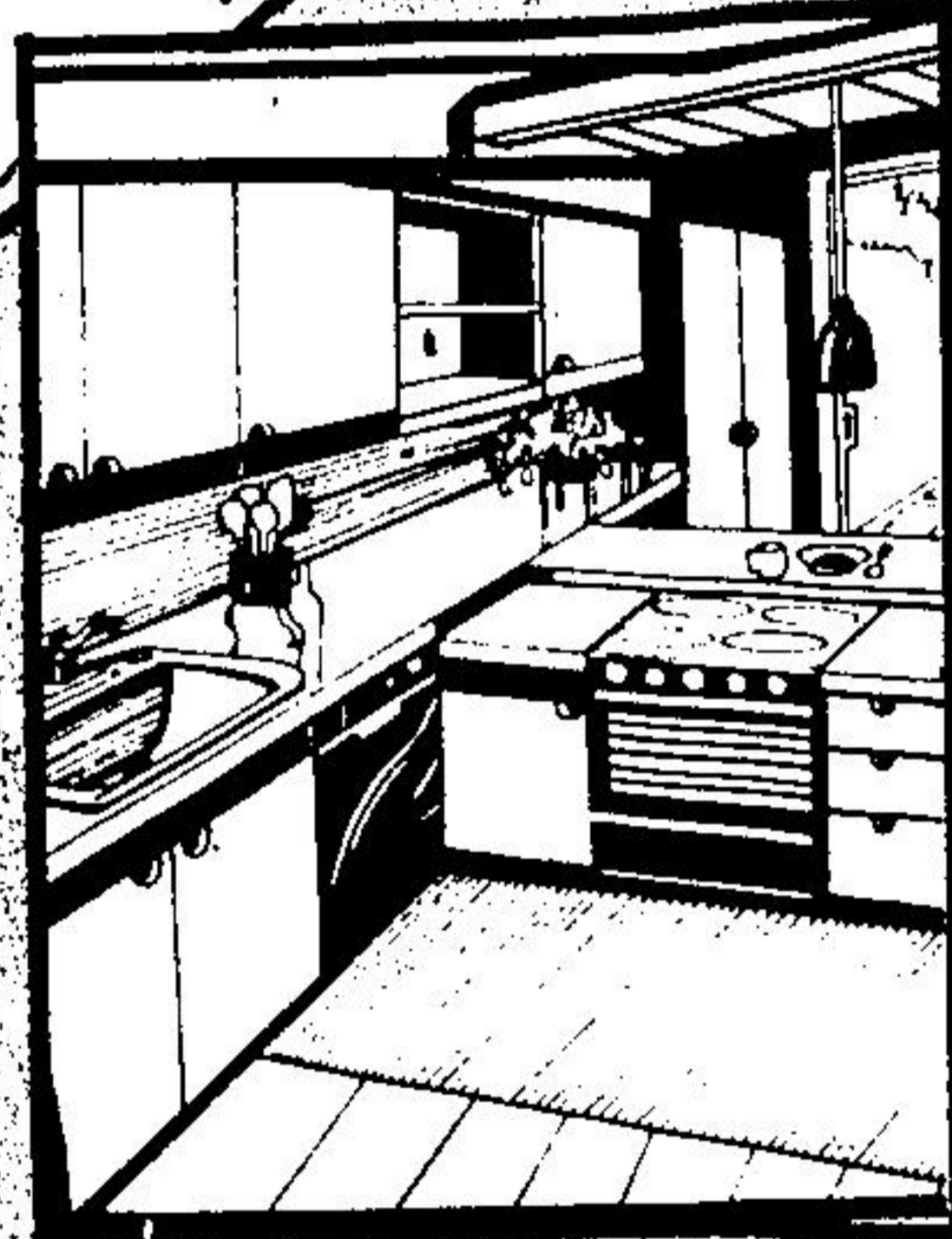
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