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*Not just for decoration...*  
**A colorful aquarium brightens any home, may even help relieve stress**

It beautifully brightens a dark corner, adds life to an empty wall, and adds a unique decorative touch to any room. It also makes a great pet, as well as a wonderful conversation piece.

In fact, a recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania concluded it is even beneficial in relieving stress. What is it? It is an aquarium filled with tropical fish.

Owning a home aquarium obviously has many positive benefits. Throughout the U.S., 10 million aquariums are being enjoyed in homes, offices, restaurants and hotels.

Undoubtedly you have seen at least one and may have wondered, "How do I or my youngsters (kids love tropical fish and easily get involved in the simple maintenance) get started?"

**Step one**

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 phone book lists most tropical fish retailers.

During your visit to a tropical fish store, you will want to get some idea of aquarium sizes and of 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.

One basic rule to follow, however, is to buy the largest aquarium possible 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 will also not want to put it on your best carpeting since, during water changes, it is possible for some water to splash on the floor, and you will be sure to want to put it 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.

**Basic requirements**

You also will 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 also will 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.

Once you have set up your aquarium, you should add a chlorine neutralizer to the water and add only a few fish initially. These few fish will help develop the proper biological conditions necessary to maintain a fully stocked aquarium.

After three to four weeks, assuming everything is functioning properly, you can then go ahead and add the rest of your fish.

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.

Following this simple routine, chances of fish disease or any other aquarium problems are remote. In fact, one of the biggest problems people have is spending too much time maintaining their aquarium. On a daily basis, of course, fish should be fed and a good quality flake food will provide a complete diet for almost all fish.



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