

EDUCATION

(2009)

EDU 006

An old bowl or tin bath is enough to set up a pond life aquarium, although a glass or plastic sided tank lets you see the activities of the animals a little more clearly.

1. Clean the bowl or tank thoroughly. A wet newspaper folded to form a sponge will remove quite a bit of dirt from the sides. Rinse well with clean water.
2. Collect gravel from a local stream and wash it in running water.
3. Place the gravel in the aquarium sloping it gently to the back – this ensures that debris collects at the front where it can be seen and taken out.
4. Any rocks you want to put at the bottom of your aquarium must be chosen carefully and be free from large cracks in which dirt can become stuck. Boil them in water and scrub them before placing them in the gravel.
5. Next add the plants pushing the roots or bases of stems into the gravel. The plants can be collected from a local pond. Canadian pond weed and water milfoil are particularly important as they put oxygen into the water that the animals need. Plants collected from ponds should be washed to remove dirt and checked to see if any duckweed is attached to them. Duckweed is not good for the aquarium as it grows too quickly, covers the surface and cuts off light to plants and animals below.
6. Take some sheets of clean newspaper and place loosely across the bottom of the aquarium on top of the gravel and plants. This protects the gravel and plants from disturbance as you pour in the water. Filtered pond water is best although tap water can be used. As you pour in the water the newspaper will rise without disturbing the plants beneath.
7. Leave the aquarium for a week to 'settle' and allow the plants to get established before the animals nibble them.
8. If you plan to put in animals from fast-flow streams, then you need to install an air pump and filter to put more oxygen into the water. You can buy these from a pet shop.
9. Animals can be caught by pond dipping (see EDU 005). Remember if you put fish, water beetles and dragonfly larvae in they will eat many of the other pond creatures in the tank. You must be careful to keep the balance of your tank right.

10. Small snails, particularly Ramshorn, keep down the growth of algae on the sides of the aquarium. Regular addition of live water fleas and mosquito larvae will keep small fish happy.
11. Never stand the aquarium in full sun as the water will overheat and some animals may die.
12. Excessive dirt can be siphoned out occasionally but a well-balanced tank should not present much of a problem because the small scavenging creatures like water lice should keep it clean.

A sheet of newspaper placed in the tank allows you to pour in water without disturbing the plants or gravel



Excessive dirt can be siphoned



REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WITH YOUR AQUARIUM PUT ALL THE ANIMALS BACK INTO A LOCAL POND. TAKE GREAT CARE NEAR WATER AND DO NOT DAMAGE TREES AND PLANTS AROUND THE WATER'S EDGE.

There are plenty of books to help you set up an aquarium and identify the plants and animals you find in a pond. Here are some of them.

"Life in Fresh Water" by E. Catherall (pub. Wayland).

"Young Scientist Investigates Pond Life" by T. Jennings (pub. Oxford).

"Observers Book of Pond Life" by J. Clegg (pub. Warne).