



**P & K Pets
Info Sheet #03**

19 Magill Rd

Stepney

SA 5069

P: 08 8362 2375

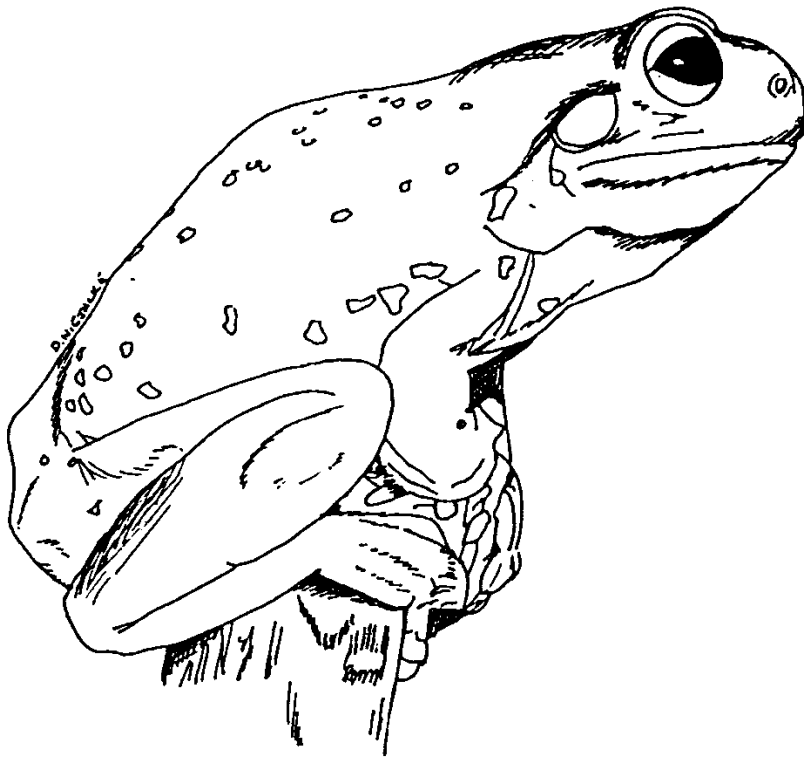
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GREEN TREE FROG

CARE



INFORMATION



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INTRODUCTION

Litoria caerulea

Green tree frogs are common across the top of Australia and down the East coast as far south as Sydney. Small numbers are also encountered in the far north-east corner of South Australia. They live in a wide variety of habitats providing a permanent supply of fresh water is nearby. They are often found in outhouses and along road sides following rain. The frogs appear to be attracted to artificial lighting where their flying and crawling prey gather.



HOUSING

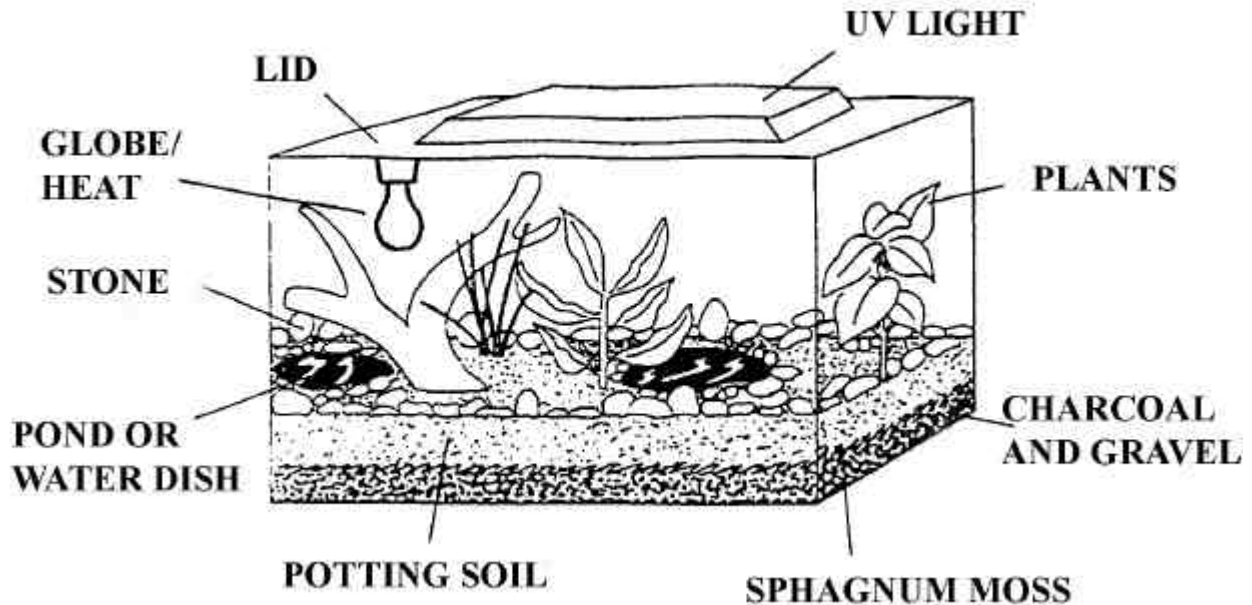
The following list of equipment is required to provide basic housing for one or two green tree frogs:

- All glass or plastic aquarium/terrarium - tall enough to grow plants (minimum 600mm x 400mm)
- 20mm layer of rocks or coarse gravel for drainage
- 20mm layer crushed coarse charcoal to absorb odours
- 50+mm of potting soil for the plants
- Plants that are suitable for terraria
- Stones/pebbles/logs - to create a habitat
- Water dish or small pond
- Steep-sided dish or plastic lid for live food
- Light, eg Gro-lux or incandescent - for plant growth
- Close fitting, well ventilated lid
- Heat source - Aquarium heater or light globe



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There are many different approaches to designing terraria for frogs, many of which are suitable. There are however a few important factors that must be considered. Under normal conditions an absolute minimum daytime temperature of 27°C is required. However short periods of cooler temperatures, such as overnight, are tolerated. Longer periods of low temperatures can also be endured if the animals are not fed or disturbed and a recess site is provided during this time. This does place the frogs under stress and unhealthy frogs may succumb to disease.

There are a number of ways to maintain a warm environment for your frogs. A plain incandescent globe mounted on the inside of the terrarium is an effective source of heat and light. A false back in a terrarium filled with water and heated with an aquarium heater can also be effective. Fixing sheets of polystyrene on the back and sides of the terraria helps retain heat and the warm glass provides a suitable position for your frog to rest. High wattage globes (>60W) should be protected by a wire cover.

A source of light which includes some ultra violet (UV) light is important in maintaining plants and healthy frogs. Incandescent light globes provide only a small amount of UV light. Some of the commercially available UV lights are considered to be very good when used in conjunction with an incandescent globe. However, by far the best source of UV light is natural sun light. Placing the terraria near a well lit window can only be beneficial to the frogs and the plants. It should be remembered that glass is an efficient filter of UV light, so any artificial sources of light should be mounted directly in the terraria.



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Green tree frogs occur near permanent water in some of the driest parts of arid Australia. It is therefore not important to maintain a high humidity. A fresh bowl of clean water and enough moisture in the soil to keep the plants alive is all that is required.

Adequate ventilation is important to maintaining healthy frogs. Build up of harmful gasses from decomposing faeces can be very rapid in a poorly ventilated cage. A balance needs to be obtained to allow adequate ventilation while maintaining warmth and at the same time preventing the terrarium from becoming saturated from excess moisture.

A layer of leaf litter, rocks or gravel on top of the potting mix will prevent it from adhering to the frogs skin.

Remember, an over crowded terraria only places undue stress on its occupants.

FEEDING

Small mice, cockroaches, grasshoppers, mealworms, slaters, moths and worms are all suitable foods. Live food is preferred by most frogs, however, you may be able to coax a frog into taking non-living food by simply wriggling it on the end of a pair of forceps. A varied diet is very important so a culture of some of the above need to be kept. There are excellent reptile supplements available in a powder form which can be used to dust mealworms to help ensure that your frog is getting all the correct requirements. Flies are relished by most types of frogs and it can be very entertaining to watch your frogs trying to catch them. They may be purchased from a fishing bait shop as maggots or, alternatively, you can breed your own (see NEC Info Sheet 45). Place the maggots in a jar with holes punched in the lid. Place this jar into the terrarium. About two weeks later, depending on temperature. flies may emerge and crawl through the holes in the lid to be eagerly gobbled up by the waiting frogs. Never use insects that have been killed with insecticide spray.

Feeding response in green tree frogs tends to be stimulated by movement. This can be used to your advantage as particularly fussy frogs can sometimes be persuaded to eat by supplying them with fast moving or flying food. Green tree frogs are nocturnal, consequently they are more likely to eat if fed in the late afternoon. Remember green tree frogs will eat anything that is small enough to fit into their mouth, including other frogs.



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PROBLEMS AND DISEASES

The small white spots on the frog's skin are normal but a change from green to brown can be a sign of distress from diseases, handling, or a poor environment (although camouflage can also play a role in colour changes). A clean supply of fresh water must be available at all times. In hot weather frogs can desiccate in less than 24 hours without access to water. Polluted water can often lead to an infection of the eye. This appears as a cloudy haze over the pupil. It can be overcome by bathing the eye twice daily in a saline eye wash solution and keeping them in a warm environment (33°C). If temperatures are too low for a day or two after frogs have been fed a large meal they may regurgitate what they have eaten.

Red Leg (*Aeromonas* sp.) is probably the most common disease encountered in captive frogs. It can be fatal, however, if symptoms are recognised early many frogs recover with no ill effects. Red leg is generally caused by some type of stress. Over crowding, poor hygiene, extended periods at low temperatures while frogs are active and being fed, all cause stress that can lead to the onset of red leg symptoms. Red leg in green tree frogs appears as a reddening of the inner thighs, a dull lustre to the skin, and often remaining inactive on the bottom of the cage. The frog may refuse food and have a dirty brownish colour to the belly. Individuals with red leg should be isolated immediately and placed in a small container with half a centimeter of water in the bottom. The lid should have a few small holes for ventilation. Place the container in a place that provides a constant temperature of about 33°C. Change the water regularly and do not feed (Frogs can survive long periods without food). It may take a few weeks for the frog to respond and while this is not always successful, most cases can be cured.

Rickets is a bone disease that is also a common problem, particularly when frogs have not been maintained under the right conditions from a small age. It can easily be recognised by the posture of a frog. The rear legs become soft and bowed, they lose the ability to jump large distances and struggle to climb vertical surfaces. A poor diet and a lack of UV light are the primary causes. The faster a frog grows the more susceptible it becomes to rickets and the more important it becomes that the correct resources be maintained.



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Cannibalism is not typically a problem with green tree frogs unless there is an extreme difference in body size between individuals that are housed together. Many other species, on the other hand, relish other frogs and will quickly devour any other frog they can fit in their mouth. Warty bellfrog (*L. raniformis*), water holding frogs (*Cyclorana sp.*) and river barred frogs (*Myxophyes sp.*) are all well known frog eaters.

Your frog may live for 20 or more years if a varied diet and suitable environment are maintained.

HANDLING

Always wet hands before picking up frogs as their skin is sensitive. If showing a class, try grasping the frog by straightening the back legs and enclosing them in the palm of your hand. Only apply as much pressure as is necessary and prevent the frog from tipping backwards by tilting the fist slightly forward. Once the legs are held straight and firm, the frog usually stops struggling and can sometimes be encouraged to croak for a class. Handling should be kept to a minimum as it only places extra stress on the animals. Always wash your hands after handling a frog as they secrete a number of chemicals from their skin that may be harmful to some people.

BREEDING

Green tree frogs are difficult to breed in captivity. Females lay several thousand eggs at a time. Maintaining the young is, therefore, very time consuming and expensive.

It is often difficult to tell the sex of a frog, with the exception for reproductive males, which develop dark pads on the inside of the thumbs to assist in gripping the female while mating takes place. Only males croak voluntarily, however, females may give a distress call when handled roughly or to warn off an amorous male.

HOLIDAY CARE

An established terrarium with adequate light will be self-contained for several weeks. A single frog may need little or no attention during short holiday breaks. Like many cold-blooded creatures, green tree frogs can survive for extended periods without food. But, remember, a single day without access to water can be detrimental.



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FURTHER READING

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