

Siamese Fighting

Betta Splendens

Origin: Southeast Asia

Size: 2.5-3 inches

Life Span: 2-3 years

Temperature: 74°F-84°F

Congratulations on your new pet! The following are some basic guidelines to help your fish live a long, healthy life.

Bettas are known as the "Jewel of the Orient" due to their variety of bright and iridescent coloration. Bettas belong to the suborder Anabantoidei, whose defining characteristic is their labyrinth organ. This organ allows labyrinth fish to take in oxygen directly from the air, instead of through the water by use of gills. Labyrinth fish have evolved in such a way to cope with the hardships of their environment.

SETTING UP THE BOWL

Equipment – bowl, gravel, water conditioner, food, liquid biological bacteria, aquarium salt (optional), air pump (optional)

Rinse both the bowl and the gravel with regular tap water thoroughly. Do not use soap or any other chemicals. This is the last time the gravel will be cleaned.

- 1) Fill the bowl halfway with room temperature tap water; add the water conditioner, the liquid bacteria, and the aquarium salt.
- Aquarium salt, while optional, is a useful treatment for sores, infections, parasites, and functions as a precautionary measure against disease organisms as it stimulates the fish's production of slime coating.
- 2) Float the bag within the bowl for about twenty minutes to acclimate the fish to room temperature.
- 3) After twenty minutes release the betta into the bowl and fill the bowl within two inches from the top.

FEEDING

Proper nutrition is important for the long-term health of the fish and to bring out their full, vibrant colors. Wild bettas feed exclusively on zooplankton, insects, and insect larvae; their captive diet should attempt to replicate this as much as possible. They can be fed a diverse diet consisting of high-protein flakes/pellets, bloodworms, brine shrimp, daphnia, tubifex, and glass worms. They should be fed a pinch of food once a day. If any food remains after thirty seconds, they are being overfed; cut the amount of food in half.

BOWL MAINTENANCE

Unfortunately, the volume of water is so small that toxic levels of fish/plant waste: ammonia and nitrite can quickly accumulate and become fatal. For this reason 25% water changes every other day are recommended. The following procedure is suggested.

- 1) Leave out a one-gallon container of water overnight, treated with water conditioner and salt.
- 2) Wipe down the inside of the bowl with an algae pad, if necessary.
- 3) Stir the gravel gently and carefully pour out 25% of the water.
- 4) Refill the bowl with the preconditioned, room temperature water.

Fortunately, there are microorganisms at work that convert ammonia into nitrite, and then nitrite into nitrate; each gas being less harmful than the one preceding it. However these organisms can only help the ecosystem; if water changes are neglected, the beneficial bacteria can easily become overwhelmed and the ecosystem is liable to crash.