

# Green Iguana

*Iguana iguana*

<b>Adult Size</b>	Specimen's lengths can range from 4-6 feet and their weight can be between 14-20 lbs.	<b>Life Span</b>	20+ years with proper care.
<b>Male/Female Differences</b>	Males have dorsal spines that are noticeably longer and thicker than females. Males also have highly developed femoral pores on the underside of their thighs which secrete a scent. Females are generally smaller in size and have slimmer heads and wider abdomens.		
<b>Compatibility</b>	Young iguanas are very timid and will not like human contact. Do not be intimidated by its tail whips, hisses, scratches, or bites; take slow steps and in time the iguana will be successfully socialized. It is highly advised not to keep multiple iguanas together because of their sheer size, territorial grounds, and aggression.		
<b>Origin</b>	North, Central, and South America.		
<b>Climate</b>	Arboreal, tropical parts of the Americas.		
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Diurnal (awake during the day)		
<b>Temperature</b>	The appropriate temperature is critical in maintaining the iguana active and healthy. Keep the temperature at 80-95°F during the day and 75-80°F at night. Provide a temperature gradient across the habitat, with areas to bask and shade, so the iguana can regulate his/her own body heat		
<b>Lighting</b>	Appropriate lighting is important since wild iguanas enjoy the full power of the sun; their captive habitat must attempt to replicate their natural environment as much as possible. The lighting should provide three things – UVB, UVA, and heat. UVB rays provide D3, a vitamin, which allows for the metabolization and absorption of calcium. Heat and UVA rays help regulate the iguana's feeding, activity, and mating. Lighting should be on for 10-12 hours a day with an emphasis on a consistent		

	<p>day/night cycle. Be careful to place their heat source somewhere the iguana cannot reach it, because burns are a serious and common injury to reptiles.</p>
<b>Humidity</b>	<p>Humidity is essential to the general health of the iguana because these reptiles receive the majority of their water intake directly from the moisture in the air. Humidity within the enclosure should be maintained around 90-100% and monitored with a hygrometer.</p>
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	<p>Green iguanas reside in the highest branches of arboreal and tropical areas.</p>
<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	<p>Reptile carpet or anything that can be easily disinfected cleaned and dried. Bark chips can also be used, but must be changed a couple times a week, as bark can get dirty and moist very quickly. Bark chips may also harbor parasites and mites, which can be difficult to get rid of.</p>
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	<p>Non-toxic hiding places will provide a spot where an iguana can retreat to if it feels threatened or uncomfortable. This is especially important for young iguanas that may not always want attention. The best things you can add to their environment are animal safe branches, vines and plants. Iguanas are disposed to climbing high places and the vines and plants will replicate their natural surroundings nicely.</p>
<b>Cage Type</b>	<p>Aquariums can be used to house juvenile iguanas, but nothing less than a 30-gallon tank. As they grow, it would be cost effective to purchase a custom built cage designed to house a fully mature iguana. This means an enclosure at least 8 feet high, 8 feet long, and 4 feet wide. Many dedicated owners redesign a room specifically intended for their iguana given that they grow to be so large. Make sure the area is escape-proof.</p>
<b>Diet</b>	<p>A varied and balanced diet is important for the long-term health of the iguana. Make sure to offer a wide selection of vegetables and fruits so that they do not become selective and hooked on a few foods. Juveniles require a higher protein content and for this reason they should be fed commercial pellets as the staple until it is three years old. Their diet should consist of 90% greens and 10% fruits since iguanas are herbivorous. Healthy vegetables, fruits, and plants include mustard greens, collard greens, kale, green beans, peas, carrots, mangos, papayas, apples, bananas, melon, dandelion flowers, and hibiscus flowers. Most fruits are high in phosphorus and for this reason they should be given sparingly.</p>
<b>Supplements</b>	<p>Calcium supplements are recommended daily, given that young iguanas are prone to calcium deficiencies. Vitamin and mineral supplements should also be administered once a week. Since these supplements are</p>

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	usually in powder form, simply sprinkle over their food.
<b>Diet Precautions</b>	Try not to feed animal protein to iguanas because their bodies are not designed to deal with it. Doing so may cause rapid, unhealthy growth. Avoid a uniform diet. Inadequate and excessive amounts of calcium and phosphorus are also issues with feeding the same foods.
<b>Feeding</b>	Chop/grate all the ingredients into a size that can easily fit into the iguana's mouth and then sprinkle calcium powder on top of it. Feed the iguana appropriate amounts twice a day. Be careful not to overfeed and make sure you are alternating both foods and supplements.
<b>Water Source</b>	Provide a constant supply of clean, fresh, and chlorine-free water. Change their water pan twice a day. Iguanas are capable swimmers and should be allowed to exercise. Fill up a kiddie pool or bathtub a couple times a week and drop them in. Keep a close eye on the iguana to make sure it is comfortable.
<b>Grooming</b>	The habitat must have the correct humidity in order for the iguana to properly shed its skin. Allowing the iguana to swim in a bathtub or kiddie pool will also facilitate their shedding of old skin.
<b>Oral and Foot Care</b>	The iguana's nails may need to be clipped every month depending on the level of their activity. Use cat safe nail clippers.
<b>Proper Handling</b>	Juveniles should be picked up with both hands making sure to support their body. Adults should not be handled unless they are completely comfortable with you. Never grab an iguana by their tail, since it can easily break off. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling a lizard with antibacterial soap.
<b>Habitat Maintenance</b>	Spot clean their enclosure daily; iguanas tend to relieve themselves in the water provided, so change the water often. They can also be trained to go on newspaper and in time will go on nothing but paper. Thoroughly clean their habitat once a week with a mild bleach solution, rinse it clean, allow it to dry, and replace the substrate.
<b>Health Concerns</b>	Iguanas are prone to metabolic bone disease (MBD), respiratory infections, kidney disease, severe burns, mites, and intestinal impaction. MBD is a serious, but preventable condition brought on about by lack of calcium or vitamin D3. Symptoms include lethargy, soft bones, and swollen limbs. Appropriate UVB lighting and a differentiated diet will help counteract this disease. Improper temperatures cause respiratory infections, which may become fatal. Irregular swimming, breathing difficulties, and lethargy are all symptoms of infection. Consult your veterinarian immediately. Kidney disease is mainly caused by

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dehydration. Symptoms include weight loss, lethargy, and frequent drinking. Correctly adjusting the humidity, offering clean water, and weekly swims should cure the problem. Severe burns are a serious and common injury to reptiles because they often get too close to their heat source and do not realize they are in harm's way. Iguanas are susceptible to mites and parasites if their habitat is not disinfected or cleaned often. Intestinal impaction can occur if the iguana eats his/her substrate, toys, or any other non-digestible items.

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