



A Basic Guide on Green Iguanas

General Information

Green iguana, the scientific names (*Iguana iguana*) are generally found in Latin America and occur naturally on some of the lesser Antilles islands. The majority of green iguanas seen in the pet trade are bred on farms in El Salvador and Costa Rica. Iguanas live in sub tropical climates, heavy rainfall and lush foliage. Green iguanas enjoy climbing high trees and are also superb swimmers especially when feeling threatened 'easy way to escape'. Also when an iguana is feeling threatened an iguana is likely to raise its tail and defend itself when it feels that you are going to harm it, even if your not, it will also 'flare itself up' by showing its dewlap to you this may cause them to open their mouths and may even possibly bite you. This only occurs usually in iguanas that have either been neglected or in juvenile iguanas that haven't got used to you yet.

Housing

A young iguana can be housed in a vivarium size of 24 x 24 x 36 or larger. However an adult iguana will need a vivarium at least 60 x 48 x 60. Adult iguanas can be housed in a ratio of 2 females to 1 male or 1 male to 1 female. Do not put two males together as this can cause serious injuries and maybe even cause death. An iguana requires ultraviolet lighting and a hot spot for about 8-10 hours per day. Iguanas like it dark at night so the ultraviolet light and spot bulbs etc should be turned off. However do not make the mistake of turning the heat source off as well because they do like it warm at night.

If you buy a vivarium at this size: 24 x 24 x 36 you will require this equipment; a 18 inch repti glo 8.0, a 15watt starter unit, 100 watt ceramic element, ceramic element holder, a ceramic reflector, a ceramic reflector guard. You will also need a temperature thermostat, bulb holder and a spot bulb and also a thermometer.

For all iguanas the vivarium should have a substrate on the bottom called orchid bark. This is better for them as it is like their natural habitat. They need a large water bowl for them to sit in, drink from and also run through without injuring themselves.

Lighting Sources

Green iguanas need light. That seems pretty obvious. But they need different types of light for different reasons and at different times of day.

- Iguanas need to have a white light during the day. The bright light not only tells them that it is daytime but when you use the nightlight, it also provides the increased heat they need during the day – especially in the basking area.
- Iguanas need special fluorescent lights to get the UVB rays they need to ensure they produce the correct levels of vitamin D, which helps them metabolize the calcium they need to maintain their health.
- Iguanas require heat all hours of the day this can be supplied by different heat sources.

Dietary Requirements

Vegetables:

- Fresh or dry alfalfa
- Blackberries, strawberries, mulberries – both fruit and leaves because of the high phosphorus – to – calcium ratio, fed sparingly.
- Broccoli – high phosphorus – to calcium fed sparingly.
- Cabbage – remove thick stem and chop for smaller iguanas.
- Cauliflower, all parts.

Greens:

- Beet greens
- Carrot greens; the carrots themselves are too hard to eat unless shredded.
- Collard greens
- Dandelion greens
- Mustard greens
- Turnip greens
- Kale, remove tough stems.
- Beans (yellow, green, soy, and other edible varieties).
- Bean sprouts
- Peas
- Lettuce (romaine, leaf, cos or escarade) not iceberg.

Fruit

Apples, peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, grapes. Many fruits have high phosphorus; therefore they should be fed sparingly.

Macaroni cheese is an ideal treat but only use sparingly as this is very high in most supplements.

Vitamin and mineral supplements can be found in 'nutrobal' it supplies the iguana with all the vital vitamins and minerals it requires to stay healthy. Dust their food 3 times a week with the nutrobal for a hatchling iguana. When the iguana reaches about 2 cut the calcium powder down to about twice a week then continue that for the rest of their life or as they reach their full size cut it right down to once a week.

On Receipt of Your Iguana

Always ensure your iguana looks healthy. When introducing your iguana leave it for a week without handling. As soon as you introduce your iguana offer it food, do not expect it to feed immediately as the iguana may need time to acclimatise. Always remember an iguana does not like feeling threatened.

Recommended Reading

- A complete pet owners manual for iguanas (Barrons)
- Reptile keepers guide to green iguanas (Barrons)
- Iguanas for dummies (Melissa Kaplan)