

SWALLOW AQUATICS CARESHEET

GIANT AFRICAN LAND SNAILS



FACTS

Snails belong to the group of animals known as molluscs. Giant Land Snails are very easy to keep, they require very little attention. Snails are active during the day as well as the night and can make very interesting pets; they can live for several years and become quite tame. The most commonly kept snail is the ACHATINA FULICA, this snail can grow up to 20cm in shell length.

FEEDING

Giant snails are very easy to feed; they are vegetarian and will eat almost any fruit or veg. The snails that I keep like lettuce and cucumber best of all, but they do eat apple, carrot, celery etc., The food must be washed before you give it to the snails as it may have been sprayed with chemicals and this could prove fatal to the snail. To keep the snails shell strong and healthy you must provide a source of calcium; we use cuttle fish, place the cuttle fish whole inside the snail's tank and the snails will gnaw at it with their little teeth. The food should be changed every day and the cuttle fish as and when needed. Sometimes the soil in the tank may get dry; if it does it can be sprayed with tepid water.

HOUSING

The best conditions for keeping snails in are glass fish tanks with lids. The size of the tank depends upon the number of snails and how big they are; remember Giant African Snails can grow very quickly. Peat is ideal to have at the bottom of the tank 2-3 inches in depth as snails like to burrow. Pieces of bark and leaves are most welcome by the snail as they like to hide away sometimes. Giant Snails need to be kept warm; the temperature for them to grow is 20-25c. In the summer the snails can be kept at room temperature but additional heating is required in the winter. Heating pads are an ideal heat source they can be fixed to the back of the tank, heating from light bulbs is not suitable as the snails will shy away from the light.

BREEDING

All snails possess both male and female sexual organs, snails are called Hermaphrodite. You still need two snails to produce baby snails, but it doesn't matter which two. Snails lay round white eggs as many as 200 can be laid at one time, they lay them in small piles some being buried in the soil. The eggs take between 2/3 weeks to hatch. The best way to hatch the eggs is to remove them from the tank and place them in a small container with some of the peat. The eggs need to be sprayed everyday with tepid water this is very important because if they become dry they will not hatch. We keep our eggs and baby snails in a small container in front of a radiator, these conditions seem ideal without the need of a heat pad. When the baby snails hatch out, place a lettuce leaf in with them as they grow they will tend to huddle together on the leaf gradually eating it gradually getting bigger. As the snails get bigger they will need more food and will eventually need to be re-housed into bigger tanks. The young snails can grow big quite quickly if the temperature, food and supply of calcium are ideal.

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