

American Green Tree Frog

Hylidae cinerea



LIFE SPAN: 6+ years

AVERAGE SIZE: 4-6 inches

CAGE TEMPS: 68-77 degrees

HUMIDITY: 60-70%

* If temp falls below 65° at night, you may need to add supplemental infrared or ceramic heat

WILD HISTORY: Native to the Southeastern United States from eastern Virginia down to Florida and as far west as Texas.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Green tree frogs have a delicate grass green skin with a light cream colored lateral stripe (on the side of the body) running from the jaw to the flank.

Because of their delicate and porous skin, handling your frog is not recommended. It is very easy to transfer toxins from hands to frog skin, and vice versa – be sure to wash your hands after handling your frog.

NORMAL BEHAVIOR & INTERACTION: Nocturnal (most active at night) and arboreal (tree dwelling). These frogs live in groups and will get along fine as long as there is proper space for each frog. A minimum of 4 gallons of tank space per frog is a good measure, but the tank should not be smaller than 20 gallons (high) overall, even for one frog.

NOTE: DO NOT house green tree frogs with other species due to the differences in environment, temperatures, and the fact that some species can be highly stressed in the presence of other species. Each species may also harbor different parasites/protozoans/bacteria (even a healthy reptile harbors a small amount at all times), which may make each other ill.

FEEDING: Carnivorous (insectivorous) - live food.

Green tree frogs eat live protein sources such as: gut-loaded crickets, earthworms and wax worms.

Wild caught insects should never be fed, since they may carry disease and parasites. All insects should be gut loaded (fed a nutritious diet about 24-hours before being offered to your frog – see our cricket care sheet).

Be careful to feed the proper size prey for your frog's size. A good rule of thumb is that a cricket should never be larger than the distance between the frog's eyes, or the distance from its eyes to its nose.

When feeding larger insects to your pet, try to make sure the insects have recently molted, as an insect with a large, hard exoskeleton is difficult to digest and may cause impactions.

Some reptile/amphibian owners find it easier and safer to feed their pet in a separate enclosure, free of bedding and furniture. This way you can be sure your pet eats all its insects, the prey cannot hide, and the frog will not pick up any bedding when grabbing prey and mistakenly ingest it along with the prey.

Do remember, however, that green tree frogs are very delicate and their skin can tear easily. Take care in handling.

SUPPLEMENTS: Dust food with calcium supplement and vitamin supplements. As a rule, a growing juvenile's food (and a pregnant/gravid female's) should be dusted more often than an adult's. Follow your veterinarian's instructions for applying supplements to avoid over-supplementing food.

Our veterinarian recommends dusting insects with a good quality calcium supplement fortified with vitamin D3, 2-3 times a week. (Avoid using a calcium supplement with added phosphorous, unless specifically directed by your veterinarian, since this can promote kidney disease.)

Always consult your veterinarian for specific directions on supplementing your pet's food, since there are many variables that go into determining the best supplementation regimen for each animal.

WATER: All water given to amphibians for bathing, swimming or drinking, as well as water used for misting must be 100% free of chlorine and heavy metals. (Not all home water filtration systems remove 100% of the chlorine and heavy metals from tap water). We recommend that you use unflavored bottled drinking water or bottled natural spring water; never untreated tap water. If tap water is used, you should treat it with a de-chlorinating treatment (available in the fish

department). If you do not want to chemically de-chlorinate the water, you can leave an open container of tap water out for at least 24 hours. The chlorine will naturally dissipate. Never use distilled water, which can cause severe medical problems, since it lacks minerals that are essential to important body functions.

Change the water in your frog's enclosure every one to two days.

A daily misting or two with chlorine-free water will also be appreciated. However, care should be taken not to allow the enclosure to become damp. Also, do not mist less than two hours before turning the heat lamps off for the day, as the droplets will not have proper time to dry and may contribute to respiratory disease.

SHEDDING: Frogs do shed their skin. Your frog may crunch his body up into an uncomfortable-looking crouching position. He will puff his body up to try to loosen the skin, then he will convulse as if he is coughing. As the skin is shed, he will eat it. It has many good nutrients, and your frog knows it!

If the tank humidity is low, your frog may not shed properly. See "Water" above.

If your frog still has a hard time getting the shed completely off its toes or head and if the retained shed is severe and cannot be removed easily, see your exotic veterinarian. It is best not to handle the frog yourself to try to remove the shed, as the skin is thin and can tear easily.

Remember to wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling your frog.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:

20 High or other taller glass tank.	UVB fluorescent bulb & housing
Large ceramic crock or plastic container for a water area	Temperature / humidity gauge – do not stick to side of tank
Several small hide houses	Coconut fiber substrate, moistened
Live plants – see amphibian safe plants below	Reptile heat pad
Metal mesh tank cover	De-chlorinator
Calcium supplement	Green tree frog book

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT: Your frog(s) need a warm, humid environment in their enclosure. A twenty-gallon high glass tank (for one to three frogs) with a metal mesh cover will work fine.

If you lose too much humidity through the metal mesh cover, you can tape plastic sheeting (thick plastic bag – ideally translucent) over part of the mesh. However, be sure NOT to block the UVB light with the plastic, as it will filter out all the important rays before they reach you pet(s). Also, be sure that any hot lights do not come in contact with the plastic, or sit too closely to the plastic.

ENCLOSURE SIZE: A minimum of 4 gallons of tank space per frog is suitable space. 20H or other taller tanks are commonly used. Remember that green tree frogs are TREE frogs; they are arboreal; so a tank that supplies more height than width is always a better choice, such as a 20 High.

HEAT PAD: Reptile heat pads can be adhered directly onto the underside of the glass bottom of the tank. Stick the pad on the glass on one of the very far ends of the tank (opposite the water dish). For safety reasons, make sure to attach the rubber feet (contained in the box) at all four corners of the underside of the tank. This will allow air to circulate underneath the tank and prevent the heat from being trapped under the tank. Leave the heat pad ON 24 hours a day.

A human-grade heat pad may be used on the low to medium setting. Do be sure to allow for proper ventilation for safety reasons. **Be sure to purchase a heat pad without automatic shut-off, which are still available.

Heat pads specifically manufactured for reptiles and human-grade heat pads are safe to leave on 24 hours a day. DO NOT use reptile heat rocks. They heat unevenly and have caused severe thermal burns in reptiles and amphibians.

*** Although your frog will most likely NOT spend much time on the floor of the enclosure, the heat pad will help contribute to the overall humidity and ambient temperature of the enclosure.

UVB LIGHT: Exposure to UVB (ultraviolet B) light is critical in allowing an animal to synthesize vitamin D₃ in their skin and metabolize calcium in their body.

If an animal is not exposed to an adequate level of UVB light, it will gradually (and sometimes quickly) develop physical problems from the result of mineral deficiencies such as low blood calcium (hypocalcaemia), stunted growth and metabolic bone disorder, which can be fatal if left untreated. In addition, recent studies have linked sub-optimal vitamin D levels with poor immune system function.

All day-active (diurnal) indoor reptiles, amphibians, birds and hermit crabs should be allowed self-selected exposure to UVB lighting for up to 8-12 hours a day. This means they should be able to bask in the light but also get away from it if desired, much as they might in the wild. Many twilight-active (crepuscular) and night-active (nocturnal) species do get some exposure to the sun and may also benefit from low levels of UVB, which helps regulate their photoperiod and vitamin D levels as well.

Please see our additional “UVB Lighting for Companion Birds and Reptiles” for specific instructions for your particular pet and the UVB bulb that we recommend for him or her.

HIDING PLACES: Green tree frogs appreciate hiding places within their enclosure.

Small huts, crevices and planted areas will give your frog a place to hide when it is nervous, wants to sleep or needs to escape light.

SUBSTRATE FOR LAND AREA: We recommend a loose coconut fiber substrate, available in the reptile department and made by several companies. It is made from the husks of coconuts. This substrate is ideal for your frog, as it will help hold humidity in and is also a perfect substrate for live plants.

Keep the substrate slightly damp, but not watery. Plant your live plants right in the substrate.

Small patches of reptile moss can also be dispersed along the surface of the substrate.

WATER AREA: About 40-50% of your frog’s enclosure should be water. For the water area, you can use a heavy ceramic crock or a plastic container. Push the water container snugly into the substrate. Arrange the substrate so it will not spill into the water container. The frog should be able to travel easily between the land and water areas. Barking tree frogs generally prefer to just sit in the water rather than swim, so be sure that you put a few smooth rocks in the water for the frog to sit on where he can be only half immersed in the water.

To keep your land area contained more neatly, you can use an aquarium divider (available in the fish department) designed for the size of the tank you are using. This will create a retaining wall for your substrate. Simply cut the divider down until it is roughly the same height as your water container. Again, smooth rocks and moss can be used to make the transition area easier to navigate. If a tank divider cannot be located, a firm piece of plastic can be used. Do not use wood, as the humidity in the tank will cause it to rot.

Using the water container makes it easy to lift the container out in order to clean it every one to two days.

BRANCHES & PLANTS: Branches must be included in the enclosure for your tree frogs.

Sand blasted grape vine branches are available in the pet store; these serve as good sturdy climbing branches. Also available are reptile vines and plastic plants. Be careful of bringing in branches from outside, as they can house parasites.

Live plants can help increase the humidity in your frog enclosure and provide coveted hiding places. Be sure to include only amphibian safe plants such as pothos, aloe, philodendrons, spider plants, ficus, and dracaena. They can be planted directly into the enclosure substrate and lightly watered a few times a week.

TEMPERATURES: Cage temperatures should be monitored daily and kept at the temperatures listed at the top of this page. Use your reptile thermometer to check the temperatures in different places in the cage regularly to make sure they continually match the listed proper temperatures.

* If the room temperature falls below 65 degrees at night, a supplemental infrared or ceramic heat fixture may be necessary. (These fixtures do not emit a light spectrum that is visible to the frog, so it will not disturb him at night, but they WILL provide the necessary supplemental heat.)

If your frog does not receive the proper heat at the proper temperatures along with UVB light, he may become sick with issues such as respiratory disease and may stop eating, as frogs have a hard time digesting their food without proper heat and light.

DAY/NIGHT LIGHT CYCLES AND HEATING: All amphibians must have distinct day and night periods in their enclosure to maintain their biological rhythms. Green tree frogs need 8-12 hours of daytime and 8-12 hours of nighttime. However, as the daylight hours change seasonally outside, daylight hours inside the tank should reflect the same.

The day period must be light, and the night period must be dark.

A timer should be used to set day/night periods.

HABITAT MAINTENANCE: Daily maintenance should consist of spot cleaning by removing soiled substrate, cleaning the water bowl thoroughly and wiping glass clean.

The entire tank should be cleaned thoroughly at least once every couple months with:

- A mild dishwashing liquid (a weak dilution) in warm water, THEN
- Vinegar & water (1:8)
OR bleach and warm water (1:32)
- Cage “furniture” should also be scrubbed clean with the same dilution.
- RINSE OFF ALL SOAP AND BLEACH THOROUGHLY WITH PLAIN WATER BEFORE RE-INTRODUCING YOUR PET TO ITS ENCLOSURE!!
- NEVER MIX VINEGAR AND BLEACH – IT CREATES A TOXIC SOLUTION
- NOTE: water used for cleaning does not need to be de-chlorinated, as your pet will not be drinking it or swimming in it.

GROOMING & HYGIENE: To reduce the risk of contracting and spreading salmonella poisoning, all handlers should wash their hands after handling any reptile or amphibian.

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY ANIMAL: smooth, even skin; no traces of mites (small, reddish brown spots around nostrils, near ears and eyes); clear eyes, rounded, full body; strong, even, smooth jaw line; bright eyes.

It is very important to keep a journal for each animal that records feeding, refusal, shedding, unusual behavior, changes in behavior and dates of bulb changes. This will help your veterinarian trouble-shoot any health issues.

We recommend physical exams every year to two years with an exotic pet veterinarian for pet reptiles and amphibians. If your vet sees your pet regularly, many common conditions that afflict pet reptiles and amphibians can be caught and treated early. If not caught early enough or if left untreated, many of these conditions can become far worse if not fatal.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS: Irregular skin; small reddish brown spots (mites) around mouth, eye area, ear area; irregular jaw line, ‘dents’ in mouth with or without cottage cheese-like material (mouth rot); cloudy eyes or dull colored body when not in a shed; bloating or thinned body; irregular feeding and defecating habits; a limp, thin body, lethargy, sunken eyes, pinkish patches or spots on belly or sides; obvious wounds from cage mates or prey.

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS INCLUDE:

HEALTH ISSUE:	SYMPTOMS:	TREATMENT:
Mites, parasites	Small reddish-brown spots around eyes, mouth & on body or in substrate. However, pet may show no signs of harboring parasites besides declining health.	See exotic pet veterinarian (fecal parasite evaluation and appropriate medication)
Skin issues – bacterial, fungal, abrasions	Ulcers, patches or wounds visible on skin, lethargy or loss of appetite	Call exotic pet veterinarian. Optimizing cage set-up, topical and systemic medications
Bloating disease	Bacterial disease - Accumulation of fluid under the skin gives a bloated look to the frog.	See an exotic pet veterinarian immediately for antibiotic therapy.

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