



# Care Guide

*Dendrobates ssp.*

## Poison Dart Frog



The perfect addition to any bioactive terrarium.

A gem in every way, poison dart frogs are one of the most colorful and fascinating frog species in the amphibian world. And the best part? They're not as difficult to care for as you may think. If you're an intermediate amphibian keeper looking to add a pop of color and activity to a little slice of rainforest, then consider the poison dart frog!

---

### Lifespan

Although there have been occasional reports that dart frogs have lived 10 to 20 years, these frogs typically live an average lifespan of 4 to 6 years.

### Size

Froglets typically measure >1 inch long at time of purchase. Depending on the species, most adult frogs reach lengths of 1.5 to 2.5 inches from snout to vent. Males are typically smaller than females.

### Natural History

This diurnal species of frog is native to the wet, tropical forests of Central and South America. They are often found near water such as permanent streams, ponds, rivers, or temporary vernal ponds.

In the wild, poison dart frogs are well, poisonous. Dart frogs have evolved to exhibit bright, flashy colors to warn predators of their foul taste and toxic skin secretions. In human care however, that is not the case. To create toxins, poison dart frogs require certain chemicals which they acquire from the foods they eat in the wild. While the exact chemical compounds required are not fully understood, one thing that is known for sure is that they are not capable of producing those toxins from the diet offered under human care. In other words, a diet of full fruit flies and crickets make dart frogs a safe and colorful pet! And always purchase captive bred specimens.

### Housing

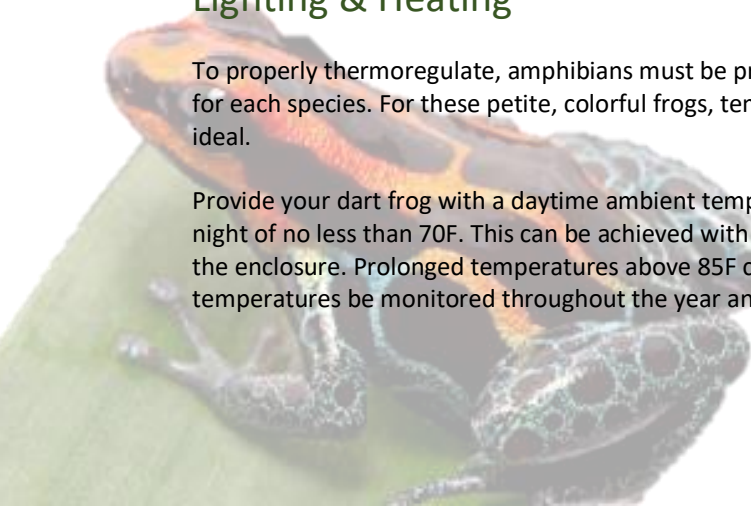
While some species may tolerate communal living, most poison dart frogs are territorial with aggression commonly observed in mature females. As such, adults should be housed in male-female pairs in all but the very largest of enclosures. For most species, an adult pair should be housed in no less than a 20-gallon long tank. If purchasing babies or juveniles, a clear sweater box or similar sized translucent container can be used until they are old enough to live in a more appropriately sized enclosure.

Due to the high humidity requirements for this species, a glass terrarium should be your first choice, with a secure, fully or partially covered screened lid. A little trial and error will help you determine how much ventilation works for your frog's habitat.

### Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, amphibians must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For these petite, colorful frogs, temperatures which are consistent and humidity that is high is ideal.

Provide your dart frog with a daytime ambient temperature between 72-80F, with a slight drop in temperature at night of no less than 70F. This can be achieved with the use of a low wattage heating pad attached to the side of the enclosure. Prolonged temperatures above 85F can prove fatal to these frogs so it is important that temperatures be monitored throughout the year and consideration for seasonal fluctuations in the home be



considered. Humidity levels for this species is high, no less than 80%. Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

**Have a lighting question? We can help!**

Because these frogs are found on the rainforest floor, the light that they are exposed to is often mottled and indirect. Exposure to appropriate wavelengths of fluorescent lighting can provide a day/night cycle for your frog, encourage healthy growth from any live plants displayed in the enclosure, and display your frog in its best colors. Providing a low output UVB is recommended but is not necessary.

## Substrates & Cage Décor

These frogs do well on all kinds of substrates types, but often benefit from substrate mixtures. The substrate you use should aid in humidity levels in the enclosure. Coconut fiber, orchid bark chips, sphagnum moss, leaf litter, and soils free of manure and fertilizer are suitable for mixing or layering together. If quarantining new frogs or housing young froglets, consider layers of moist paper towels instead.

Dart frogs appreciate variability in housing décor, hiding and eagerly exploring their environment during the day. Cork bark flats/rounds/tubes, sterilized woods, coconut houses, artificial and/or live hardy plants, and most commercially available reptile décor is acceptable for decorating your frog's habitat.

Offer your frog a water bowl, changing out the water daily with either dechlorinated tap water or bottled water (never distilled), and disinfected weekly. The use of fresh tap water can introduce heavy metals or chlorine/chloramine to your frog and its environment and is best avoided whenever possible. Contaminants can be present in tap water and harm your frog, and heavy metals can leave unsightly deposits on the glass. If the continued purchase of bottled water is not possible, then dechlorinators can be purchased to use with tap water. Additionally, to maintain proper humidity levels for your frog, mist the enclosure daily using dechlorinated tap water or bottled water as well.

Automation provides the best option for keeping your humidity levels high, not to mention making your frog's care easier. A quality fogger, while more expensive, can provide consistent humidity levels throughout the day. It is important to note that the enclosure should not remain continuously wet, so expect dry periods in between misting. Additionally, proper drainage is a must. To prevent pooled water from building up at the bottom of your frog's enclosure, some pet parents opt to build a false bottom at the bottom of the enclosure.

## Diet & Nutrition

Poison dart frogs are insectivores, meaning they primarily consume small insects and do not eat plants or vegetables. Your frog should be offered gutloaded, dusted insects regularly, which include appropriately sized flightless fruit flies and occasional crickets. Juveniles and smaller species of darts can be offered *melanogaster*, a smaller faster breeding fly. Adult frogs or larger species of darts can be offered *hydei*, a larger slower breeding fly.

Prey should always be dusted with a good calcium supplement complete with vitamin D3. A multivitamin should be used as well, but as formulas differ, be sure to follow the manufacturers directions regarding how much and how often. Only offer as many food items into the enclosure as your frogs will consume in 20 minutes. Excess feeders (especially fruit flies) tend to reproduce in the enclosure and can potentially become a source of stress to frogs that are not hungry.

## Handling & Temperament

It is in the best interest of this animal that they are not handled and are kept as display animals only.



**Ask us about bioactive setups!**

