



A Unique, Short-Lived Gem.

Given their unique care, mantis are best for those with invertebrate experience, but are not impossible to keep. It is always best to research the particular mantis you are interested in keeping. At Ill Exotics, we offer 3 different species of mantid: Ghost Mantis; Orchid Mantis; Spiny Flower Mantis.

Lifespan

A short-lived species, not usually exceeding 8-12 months.

Size

Size depends on the species.

Ghost Mantis (*Phyllocrania paradoxa*): average size is 45mm, or 1-2".

Orchid Mantis (*Hymenopus coronatus*): average size is 70mm. Females up to 3". Males < 1".

Spiny Flower Mantis (*Pseudocreobotra wahlbergii*): average size is 45mm, or 1-1.5".

Natural History

Ghost Mantis (*Phyllocrania paradoxa*): Endemic to Africa and Madagascar.

Orchid Mantis (*Hymenopus coronatus*): Endemic to Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia where its warm and humid.

Spiny Flower Mantis (*Pseudocreobotra wahlbergii*): Endemic to southern and eastern Africa.

Housing

Ghost Mantis (*Phyllocrania paradoxa*): One of the few species of mantis that *can be housed communally*, but can still be cannibalistic if not well fed. An enclosure size that is at least 3 times as tall as the mantis is long and 2 times the mantis is wide is best. The enclosure type can be glass or mesh and should have proper ventilation, containing screen or mesh on the top so that the mantis can hang upside down during molting.

Orchid Mantis (*Hymenopus coronatus*): The gender of your mantis is very important when considering enclosure size as females tend to grow larger than males. An enclosure size that is at least 3 times as tall as the mantis is long and 2 times the mantis is wide is best. Because of its higher humidity demands, an enclosure with glass or solid sides is best so long as it contains screen or mesh at the top so that the mantis can hang upside down during molting.

Spiny Flower Mantis (*Pseudocreobotra wahlbergii*): Given their high levels of aggression toward each other, housing this species together is not recommended. An enclosure size that is at least 3 times as tall as the mantis is long and 2 times the mantis is wide is best. Because of its lower humidity requirements, the enclosure type should contain adequate ventilation, but can be glass or mesh. Make sure that the top of the enclosure contains screen or mesh for the mantis to hang upside down on during molting.

Temperature & Humidity

As a rule of thumb, most mantid species can be kept at room temperature with no special heating requirements (65-80F).

Maintenance and misting will depend on the size and type of enclosure and species of mantis. Always use spring bottle water, distilled water, or reverse osmosis water (RO) when misting your mantis enclosure. Never use tap water.

Ghost Mantis (*Phyllocrania paradoxa*): 65-80F, 50-70% humidity, light indirect mist daily

Orchid Mantis (*Hymenopus coronatus*): 70-90F, 60-80% humidity, light indirect mist daily (solid enclosure types) or light indirect mist twice daily (for mesh enclosure types). Younger nymphs tend to be less tolerant of lower humidity levels and should be kept on the higher spectrum of humidity levels.

Spiny Flower Mantis (*Pseudocrebotra wahlbergii*): 77-86F, 40-60% humidity, light indirect mist daily

Substrates & Cage Décor

For mantis, the substrate you chose will aid in the recreation of its natural habitat and ensure a safe and functional environment. Coconut fiber, orchid bark chips, potting soils free of manure and fertilizer, peat moss, a moist paper towel, or sphagnum moss are suitable for most species. They can even be mixed or layered for a more effective, appealing look. Mantis of all species would appreciate faux or live plants/flowers or branches to climb, perch, prey upon, and display their natural behaviors.

In the case of the **Orchid Mantis**, a substrate containing microfauna* (such as springtails and isopods) is ideal. As this species is susceptible to bacterial infections due to their high humidity levels, having a bioactive terrarium would be beneficial for breaking down naturally forming mold and bacteria that occur in moist soil or from leftover food.

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Diet & Nutrition

Mantids are ambush predators, meaning they primarily lie and wait for potential prey to walk by for an opportunistic meal. Your mantis should be offered gutloaded, appropriately sized fruit flies & crickets.

Mantises do not have to eat every day. Depending on the species, a mantis can eat every 1-4 days. The size and type of prey also depends on the species, size, body condition (skinny or fat), and life stage of your mantis. Food can be left in the enclosure to hunt or be offered to your mantis off of tweezers or tongs.

Beware! One of the most common mistakes of any new mantis owner is overfeeding or leaving too many prey items in the enclosure, so it is important to develop a feeding schedule. To reduce harm to your mantis, ensure that all uneaten or half eaten prey is removed from the enclosure and make sure that prey items being offered are not too large.

You do not need to offer your mantis a water dish. A mantis should be able to obtain all of its hydration needs from its prey and light, daily mists of the enclosure.

Molting

As a mantis grows, they undergo a process of shedding their exoskeletons called **molting**. It is very important to pay attention to a mantis' molt as a mantis who cannot successfully molt may die if it cannot emerge completely from its exoskeleton if, for example, the habitat is too dry.

A mantis requires 7-9 molts to reach adulthood. It can take 9-15 days between molts, depending on the temperature and humidity. Ensure that your mantis' humidity levels are appropriate. After a mantis molts, it is not fully "dry" and may take up to 24 hours in nymphs and 1-4 days in adults for their exoskeleton to harden.

During this time, **it is important not to move or open your mantis' enclosure**. If this happens, a mismolt can occur, which is when a mantis is either stuck in their exuvia or has fallen to the bottom of the enclosure.