



Arboreal Tarantulas: Not Always Best For Beginners.

Given their speed and unique environmental needs, arboreal tarantulas are often recommended for keepers with some experience owning tarantulas. This care guide is meant to provide you with basic care information for arboreal tarantulas. That being said, it is best to know your tarantula's scientific name and research which species is right for you.

Lifespan

Lifespan depends on the species, but females typically live longer than males: 5-35 years.

Size

Size depends on the species. Examples:

Pink Toe Tarantula (*Avicularia avicularia*): 3.5-5" leg span

Green Bottle Blue (*Cromatopelma cyanopubescens*): 6.25" leg span

Venezuelan Suntiger (*Psalmopoeus irminia*): 5.5" leg span

Natural History

Arboreal, or tree-dwelling, tarantulas have a lighter build with thinner bodies and longer legs, with extra tarsal scopulation. In other words, their lighter weight and increased surface area at the end of their legs allows them to climb any surface quickly and effortlessly, unlike heavier terrestrial tarantulas.

There is a difference between New World and Old World tarantulas.

New World tarantulas use urticating hairs for defense, which are barbed, irritating hairs kicked up from their abdomens as a form of defense. They typically have milder venom and many of them are considered docile. Old World tarantulas lack urticating hairs but will use their fangs and often "medically significant venom" as defense. These fast and feisty spiders demand a bit more experience to care for, have complicated husbandry needs, and should not be handled.

Housing

As an arboreal species, it is important that your enclosure is taller than it is wider to compliment your tarantula's natural climbing abilities, but this really depends on the size of your tarantula. Young slings may be kept in small deli cups, dram bottles, or Amac boxes while adults may be kept in larger glass or acrylic enclosures, such as those made by Exo Terra or Zoomed.

Most arboreal species are tropical and require adequate humidity levels, therefore proper ventilation is a must when keeping these tarantulas. Cross ventilation is ideal to ensure proper air flow. If making your own, be sure that ventilation holes are not large enough for your spider to slip through or that materials used for ventilation are not susceptible to damage and escape by your spider. As a rule of thumb, ventilation holes drilled into the sides or top of your enclosure should not be larger than ½ of the size of your spider's body.

Lighting & Heating

As a rule of thumb, most tarantula species can be kept at room temperature with no special requirements (68-74F). If you are comfortable then your tarantula is comfortable.

If looking to illuminate the enclosure for aesthetic purposes, small LED lights are perfect.

Substrates & Cage Décor

Even in the case of an arboreal tarantula, 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, and sphagnum moss are suitable for most species. They can even be mixed or layered for a more effective, appealing look*.

Most arboreal tarantulas appreciate vertical opportunities for web building. Cork bark flats/rounds/tubes, sterilized woods, artificial and/or live hardy plants, and most commercially available reptile décor is acceptable.



Diet & Nutrition

Tarantulas are ambush predators, meaning they primarily lie and wait for potential prey to walk by for an opportunistic meal. Your tarantula should be offered gutloaded, dusted insects, which include appropriately sized crickets, dubia roaches, hornworms, and mealworms.

Beware! One of the most common mistakes of any new tarantula owner is overfeeding so it is important to develop a feeding schedule. Slings should be offered food every 3-4 days. Juveniles should be fed no more than 1x/week. Adults can be fed every 10-14 days. Do not leave uneaten prey in the enclosure, especially if your tarantula is in premolt or in the process of molting. To reduce harm to your tarantula, ensure that all uneaten prey is removed from the enclosure.

Ensure that your tarantula is provided with clean dechlorinated water daily in a small, shallow water dish.

Molting

As a tarantula grows, they undergo a process of shedding their exoskeletons called **molting**. Molting provides new sensory and protective hairs, and helps shed external parasites. Younger spiders may molt as often as once a month while older spiders may molt annually. Prior to molting, your spider's appetite and activity may decrease and begin to develop a dull coloration. When molting, you may find your tarantula lying on its back – it is not dead! It may take 15 minutes to several hours for your spider to molt. As the old exoskeleton is shed, the tarantula's body is soft and vulnerable for several days. It is important that during this time your spider is left alone, not handled, and that prey items such as crickets are not left roaming the enclosure.

Handling & Temperament

For the most part, handling arboreal tarantula species is not recommended. These spiders are often quick and some species may contain venom. It is in the best interest of this animal that they are kept as display animals only.