

# **Jungle Bob's Reptile World**

## **Care Sheet: Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)**

### **General Information**

One of the most commonly mistreated and misunderstood animals in the pet trade: the Green Iguana. Green Iguanas are naturally found throughout southern Mexico, Central America, and South America and now unfortunately are considered an invasive species in the southern United States. They have been extremely popular in pet stores across the country for decades due to their gorgeous color and inexpensive price. However, the overwhelming majority are not kept properly (to say the least). Male iguanas can reach an adult size of more than six feet, while females are smaller, usually growing to four or five feet. They can quickly go from a cute 12" baby to a potentially dangerous 6ft adult within 3-4 years and will outgrow any tank/terrarium/aquarium you may have within 1 year. Due to the lack of information given by most pet stores, this leads to iguanas being given up for "adoption", released into the wild, or even killed. Due to their enormous size and lifespan of 20+ years, we choose not to sell them in our store because we get phone calls and emails multiple times per week with the same story. "I got my iguana at (insert big box pet store name here) and they told me to feed it lettuce and keep it in a 10 gallon tank so it will stay small. This is of course wildly incorrect. So, we take in Iguanas that need homes and rehome them whenever we can, and make sure the person taking them knows EXACTLY what they are getting into and often deny them if they can't provide proof of a proper habitat. *PLEASE DO EXTENSIVE HOMEWORK/RESEARCH BEFORE PURCHASING ANY ANIMAL...ESPECIALLY IGUANAS!*

### **Temperature and UV Lighting**

Green Iguanas should be maintained at a daytime temperature of 85-95 degrees, with a basking spot reaching up to 100. Night time temperatures should be maintained between 70 -75 degrees. If your home is cooler than these temperatures at night, you will need a black/red/ceramic heat bulb to be used at night. Iguanas come from a humid environment and ideally humidity should be maintained by spraying the enclosure down daily. Green Iguanas require 10-14 hours a day of UVB light. This light enables the Iguana to produce vitamin D3. The vitamin D produced by UVB metabolizes the calcium in the lizard's diet. It is also very important to change your UVB light every 6-8 months, after this time the light stops producing adequate UVB. If you're not sure if your UV light is still producing UVB, bring it in and we'll be happy to test the light for you.

### **Housing**

Newborn baby iguanas should be started out in a cage no smaller than 1 40 Gallon Breeder (36x18x18) and should be upgraded within 6-12 months. There is no such thing as "too big" for an iguana enclosure. In order for them to be "tamed" they require a very large (specifically tall) enclosure. Green Iguanas feel most comfortable when at or above your eye-level. A custom built enclosure is nearly essential for any iguana over 1 year old. Ideally something at least 6ft tall and about 8ft wide and about 3ft deep would be best.

## **Calcium**

Green Iguanas also require a calcium and vitamin supplement. This supplement works with the UVB light allowing the lizard to receive the proper amounts of calcium and vitamins. This should be used every day as babies and reduced to 1-2 times a week as adults. Calcium is sold in a powder form and is sprinkled on the vegetables that you feed your Iguana. You should apply a very light coating to the food items, being careful not to waste any excess powder.

## **Bedding**

Our recommendation for bedding is Cypress Mulch (our favorite brand is Keeper's Choice). This bedding is clean and dust-free and also absorbs water which helps maintain a high relative humidity.

## **Food and Water**

Green Iguanas are herbivores and their diet should consist of green leafy vegetables. The following vegetables should make up most of an iguana's diet: Collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens. Fruits can also be given, but treated as a "treat" or "snack" as too much sugar can be bad for the animal's digestive system. Examples of ideal fruits are: Apple, bananas, strawberries, figs, peaches, mango, papaya, cantaloupe, grapes, blackberries, and blueberries. Iguanas also can be fed dry pellet foods as a supplement to the diet stated above. Iguanas are excellent swimmers and a water bowl large enough for them to completely submerge themselves is ideal, but not necessary.

## **Cleaning and Handling**

The terrarium should be cleaned as necessary. Any fecal matter or left over food should be cleaned out several times a week. The bedding should be completely changed once a month. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner. Fresh clean water should always be provided. You can handle your Iguana for longer periods of time once it has become more accustomed to you and its new habitat. Tweezer/Tong feeding is a great way to build trust with your new pet. Remember never pick up your Iguana by the tail, it can break off.

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