

Easy Aquarium Plants - Prep, Planting & Care

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

- Photoperiod: start 6–7 hours.
- Maintenance: weekly 30–50% water changes; gentle gravel vac around crowns and rhizomes.
- Substrate: WIO Wetlands/FloraBed Soils or similar for beginners. Aquasoils for more advanced
- Fertilizer: 2hr Aquarist APT1 for first six months, then for small fish loads, switch to APT3 per directions or similar. Plus root tabs per guidance below.
- Flow & filtration: aim for gentle circulation reaching all corners to keep plants clean.
- Acclimation: many plants shed emersed leaves after planting—trim and wait for submersed regrowth.

PREPERATION

Potted in 2" Plastic Pots

- Slide the plant out of the pot.
- Tease rockwool away with fingers; comb remaining fibers from roots under running water.
- Trim long or mushy roots to ~1–2 inches; keep firm white roots.
- Keep plants moist during prep; plant immediately after cleaning.

Bunches with Lead Weights or Potted in Ceramic Rings

- Remove and discard ceramic ring, foam and any lead weight, do not leave in tank
- Separate stems; discard mushy pieces; trim ¼–½" off stem ends.
- Keep plants moist during prep; plant immediately after cleaning.

PLANTING & CARE

Crypts (Cryptocoryne)

- Place each crown with the growing point just above the substrate—do not bury the crown.
- Space 1.5–2 inches (Crypt Parva about 1 inch).
- Insert a root tab near each clump in inert substrate.

Care (specifics)

- Light: low–medium. Heavy root feeders—refresh root tabs every 2–3 months.
- Patience: slow starter, then ramps up after settling.

Trimming & propagation

- Remove oldest outer leaves at the base.
- Detach and replant runners once pups have 4–5 leaves.

Common issues

- 'Crypt melt' after transplant—trim dead leaves and wait; roots resprout.
- Thin/transparent leaves → nutrient shortage; add tabs and keep photoperiod steady.

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Swords (Echinodorus)

Planting (specifics)

- Plant deep but keep crown just above substrate line (exposed). Allow 4–6 inches radius for medium varieties.

Care (specifics)

- Light: low–medium (medium tightens growth and enhances reds).
- Very heavy root feeders—large root tabs every 1–2 months; supplement column ferts in lightly stocked tanks.

Trimming & propagation

- Remove whole old leaves at the base.
- Cut and replant runner plantlets once they have several leaves and roots.

Common issues

- Pale leaves → iron/overall nutrient deficiency; refresh tabs/ferts.
- Can shade neighbors—plan placement.

Anubias (rhizome plants)

Planting (specifics)

- Never bury the rhizome—attach to wood/rock with thread or gel superglue; or wedge between stones.

Care (specifics)

- Light: low; avoid strong direct light to limit algae on slow leaves.
- Minimal fert; moderate flow keeps leaves clean.

Trimming & propagation

- Divide by cutting rhizome (each piece ~4–5 leaves). Remove older algae-covered leaves at base.

Common issues

- Rhizome rot if buried—lift and reattach.
- Green spot algae—move to shadier spot, shorten photoperiod slightly, improve flow.

Ferns (Java Fern; Bolbitis)

Planting (specifics)

- Do not bury rhizome—tie or glue to wood/rock; ensure flow around fronds.

Care (specifics)

- Light: low–medium. Light water-column dosing helps; avoid excess micros.
- Moderate flow reduces debris and algae.

Trimming & propagation

- Cut damaged fronds at the rhizome.
- Detach plantlets from leaf tips when 1–2 inches and reattach elsewhere.

Common issues

- Rhizome rot if buried.
- Black beard algae under high light with low CO₂/flow—reduce light, increase flow.

Carpet Plants (Dwarf harigrass, Dwarf sagittaria, Pearlweed)

Planting (specifics)

- Split pot into many tiny plugs (5–10 leaves/runners). Plant with tweezers 1–2 inches apart in a grid; keep crowns above substrate.
- Press substrate gently around each plug so it doesn't float. Best if planted in Fine substrate

Care (specifics)

- Light: medium preferred for carpeting; low grows slower/taller.
- CO₂ not required for these easier carpets but increases speed/density. Place root tabs under the grid in inert substrate.

Trimming & propagation

- Once established, mow to thicken; redirect runners to fill gaps.

Common issues

- Algae on slow carpets under high light—reduce intensity/photoperiod; maintain flow.

Moss (tissue culture cups)

- Open cup and lift out moss mat. Rinse thoroughly to remove all gel/medium (warm tap, then dechlorinated water).
- Divide into many small wisps—avoid thick clumps that trap debris.
- Optional: soak in dechlorinated water 10–15 minutes to dissolve residual gel.

Planting & care

- Spread very thin layers on mesh/wood/rock; tie with cotton thread or use tiny dabs of gel superglue.
- Light: low–medium. Flow: gentle–moderate. First 1–2 weeks keep photoperiod ~6–7 hours while it attaches.
- Trim regularly ('haircuts') and siphon clippings to keep pads airy.

Common issues

- Gunk buildup—use a turkey baster to puff and siphon during water changes.
- Algae if light too strong with low nutrients/flow—shorten photoperiod and improve circulation.

Bunched Stem Plants – lead-weight or clay pot bundles

Typical for Anacharis/Egeria, Bacopa, Hygrophila (corymbosa/angustifolia), Ludwigia repens, Rotala rotundifolia and similar easy stems.

Planting

- Plant individual stems 1–1.5 inches apart; bury 1–2 nodes. Do NOT re-bunch with the lead long-term.
- Optionally plant in small groups of 3–5 with spacing between groups to maintain flow and light.

Care

- Light: low–medium works; medium yields tighter internodes and better color.
- Fertilization: benefit from both root tabs (near base rows) and water-column dosing (NPK + micros).
- Flow: moderate to keep leaves clean and reduce algae; avoid dead spots.

Trimming & propagation

- Top once stems near the surface; replant tops and remove weak/shaded lower portions.
- Hedge shaping: trim at staggered heights for a dome and to refresh leggier bases.

Common issues

- Leggy growth → increase light slightly, improve spacing/flow, or trim and replant tops.
- Melt after shipping is common—healthy nodes usually resprout.

Floating Plants (Red Root Floater, Salvinia, Azolla)

Planting

- Do NOT plant. Float at surface; use a ring/corral to keep away from filter input if needed

Care

- Low–medium; avoid harsh, focused beams that scorch leaves.
- Fertilization: water-column dosing, excellent at reducing Nitrate and phosphate.
- Flow: Gentle ripple only—too much flips/sinks leaves; too little invites surface film.

Trimming & propagation

- Thin weekly; keep leaves dry (minimize splash).

Common issues

- Yellow/tiny new leaves → increase fertilization.
- Brown edges → heat/splash or K shortage
- Post-shipping melt → 3–7 days low stress, shorter light.
- Goldfish/large cichlids may eat/shred; leave clear air path for bettas

Bulb Plants (Dwarf Water Lily, Tiger Lotus, Banana Plant)

Planting

- Sprout/eyes upward. Do not fully bury bulbs—leave $\sim\frac{1}{3}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ exposed to prevent rot
- Nest bulb lightly in substrate or wedge between pebbles
- Banana plant 'bananas' stay above or just at the substrate

Care

- Low-medium works; medium gives faster growth and color (esp. red tiger lotus).
- Fertilization: use root tabs near bulb every 4–6 weeks.
- Flow: Gentle ripple only—too much flips/sinks leaves; too little invites surface film.

Trimming & propagation

- Trim larger pads/stems at the base to keep plants compact; remove surface pads if you want to limit shade.
- Daughter bulbs or side shoots may form—separate when they have roots and a few leaves

Common issues

- Soft/rotting bulb → discard.
- Transparent leaves → low nutrients; add root tabs
- Holes/ragged edges → fish nibbling or potassium deficiency.
- Goldfish and some plecos may chew leaves.
- Provide open surface for occasional pads if keeping surface clear isn't critical, leave clear air path for bettas

