

# All about Iguanas! What you need to know about this amazing dinosaur.

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**Green iguana**

*Iguana iguana*



The Green Iguana is the most popular of the 35 known species of iguana, found in the pet trade in almost every country. Babies are the size found most often and can be deceptively adorable,

but don't let the cuteness fool you, with proper husbandry they grow quickly and live up to their reputation for being one of the most commonly defensive species in the hobby.

This large lizard is popular for many reasons, the main one being its size and appearance. Hatchlings will come out of the egg 2.5-4 inches and can be kept in smaller commercially available enclosures as they grow while adults get big and stay big, requiring a custom-sized space. Adult iguanas will reach a length of 6 to 6.5 feet with a tail and up to 30 pounds. They come in a large color range from greens, blues, reds, oranges and yellows; their bright colors, dewlaps, spikes, and long tails give them a prehistoric appearance.

Paired with their defensive nature, advanced husbandry and space requirements they can become large and overwhelming quickly which leads them to being a released pet. Being native to the tropical areas of Central and South America, they are highly invasive in many other tropical places and may be illegal in some areas due to this.

\*please dont release reptiles, even if they are native to where you are living, find a rescue or shelter near you\*

Requirements (specific supply amount is dependent on the size of the enclosure)

- Enclosure custom sized large ones
- For smaller iguanas 36x 18 x 36 screen enclosure. This will only last a few months.
- [Basking lamp](#)
- Plug-in lamp dimmer
- [uvb](#)
- Plant lights
- [Zilla 24/7 Digital Timer Power Center](#) power strip timer
- Temperature gun
- [Exo Terra 2qt Mister](#) sprayer
- [Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer](#)
- Clean up crew pack
- [Bio active kit](#)
- Plant packs
- [Vines](#)
- [Branches](#)
- [Water bowls / food bowls](#)
- Vitamins



## **Enclosure**

They will need a large space for their entire life, which can be 25 to 30 years (or even more). These spaces, due to size will need to be custom made, they can be repurposed furniture, custom screen enclosure, outdoor enclosure or a speciality large enclosure. While it is common to see them free roaming inside a home we do not recommend this as a safe practice. If a room should be used, it should be specially modified and just for the reptile alone with all fire, mold and drainage safety measures taken accordingly.

The minimum size for one adult should be 10ft x 5ft x 6ft, with larger sizes always being better. With the Iguana getting as big as they do in weight and length they will use all of the space given to trample anything in their way, knocking everything over, so designing the enclosure with everything being able to be secured fully is the best to keep the animal safe. Building an outdoor enclosure around a tree would be a great way to give natural UVB, shade and security.

Hatchlings can be kept in commercially available enclosures, upgrading enclosure, decor and supplies sizing as they outgrow them quickly, but still should be large enough to provide adequate temperature ranges.

## **Substrate**

Since young iguanas are small enough to be kept in more commonly available enclosures you can use the conversion chart to find how much terra firma would be needed for whatever

enclosure you choose for the reptile's current size as it is the best substrate for the needed humidity spikes.

<https://www.thebiodude.com/blogs/how-do-i-create-a-bioactive-vivarium/how-many-gallons-is-my-enclosure-how-do-i-figure-out-how-much-substrate-that-i-need>

Larger outdoor enclosures would not need a substrate as they would usually have the dirt. Although it could be built with a concrete or rock bottom for ease of cleaning, we prefer bioactivity. Note: depending on the environment where the outdoor enclosure is built, it still may need to be supplemented with UVB lighting if it is too shaded or the climate has significant amounts of cloud cover. It is also imperative to understand your outdoor seasons, temperature high and lows and ensuring that no critters from the outside can get inside.

## **Decor**

Everything for this reptile will need to be sturdy as anything not heavily secured will be knocked over and it may injure the iguana(or the enclosure). Heavier items will need to be secured completely and should be tested with human intervention (like pushing on it) to make sure it's safe.

All live plants need to be very well started before being added in, because of the iguanas diet they may be eaten completely before they fully take over the enclosure. The dudes' substrate mixes are perfect for planted enclosures, giving your animal the best food options while also being aesthetically pleasing. A few plants we recommend are sturdy trees that grow in your climate, hibiscus trees/shrubs, Ficus Trees and other bushes/shrubs. Healthy edibles can also be implemented into the enclosure. Plants such as Basil, Oregano, Rosemary, Mint and Opuntia Cacti can also be grown with ease in your bioactive environment or outside. The plants however will get destroyed, eaten and climbed on. In the wild, Iguanas will spend the majority of their time in the tree tops, usually climbing all the way to the top and basking in the sun, absorbing all the heat and UVB. When Josh went to Belize this behavior was witnessed everywhere, with as many as four adult iguanas per tree. These Trees were very large, sturdy and had generous shade and perching opportunities.

## **Lighting/ Heating**

Iguanas have a unique organ called a “third eye” on the top of their heads, They use this eye to find the best basking spots in their nice hot tropical biomes to thermoregulate. This means not only will they need a uvb light and a plant LED, but they will need a separate bulb, or bulbs for basking.

UVB is important for the animals overall health, 6% is recommended and should be replaced per the box’s expiration date. This can help prevent a common health issue found with pet iguanas which is metabolic bone disease. As long as the reptile is inside they will need artificial UVB provided. Outdoor enclosures have access to natural UVB.

For heating This modern dinosaur loves the heat, taking advantage of any spaces that have direct sunlight or basking lights. This can be a combination of bulbs, ceramic heat emitters and heat panels or several of one type. Outdoor enclosures in hot areas have the natural elements on their side, but special care should be taken that the enclosure is shaded nicely so the animal can escape from the elements and heat. During the winter months they have a properly insulated hide with good heating.

- Basking 100-115
- Ambient 78-85
- Night time 75-80

**Due to the large space they require you may need to add a higher wattage heating element and or more than one heating element to get the temperatures right, especially if the animal is kept inside.** When using very high wattage heat elements it is imperative to utilize a thermostat and ensure the thermostat is plugged into a grounded outlet.

For the best plant lighting we suggest the Dude’s Glow & Grow LEDs. As the iguana may make a snack of anything planted inside the enclosure, they need the best growth. Trees or shrubs also need a very dense amount of light, so it is important to provide that if you want to provide shaded opportunities for your iguana.

## **Humidity**

Sometimes found swimming, this lizard loves the water. Giving them a tub large enough for their entire bodies is useful for them to drink from and soak in on their own as they enjoy 65-75% humidity with weekly spikes or rain showers. For simpler watering you can set up a misting system, or build an outdoor system with PVC piping. Utilizing a Mist King system or other

misting system is highly recommended with this species, especially if they are kept indoors. Young iguanas dehydrate very quickly so fresh water and humidity spikes are very important.

## **Food/ water**

For being such a large lizard, the iguana has developed a mainly vegetarian “salad” based diet. The best options are varied fresh greens, vegetables, flowers, fruits and leaves. They will forage and eat anything available inside the enclosure so it's imperative to only plant things that are safe for them to consume. This is another reason they are an easily invasive species, they will happily eat anyone's garden.

A good diet ratio being 10% fruits, 30-40% vegetables and 50-60% leafy greens, with leafy greens being an everyday food staple. Some commonly found food examples:

### Leafy greens

- Collard greens
- Mustard greens
- Dandelion greens (and flowers)
- Hibiscus (flowers and greens)
- Turnip greens

### Vegetables

- Snap peas
- Carrots
- Sweet potato
- Cucumber
- Zucchini
- Squash (yellow, butternut, acorn, spaghetti)

### Fruits

- Mango
- Apples
- Melon
- Water melon
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- Pears

Iguanas are definitely an animal that uses association for food, which can be done especially easy as they are color driven to find various fruits and veggies. Bright edible options are the

best way to stimulate a feeding response and associate with the iguana. Shredding the harder vegetables and fruits will make them easier to consume.

## **Handling**

With most reptiles it's the best option to get a youngster that can be regularly handled to get used to human interaction, with iguanas and many large lizard species this does help. But once they hit sexual maturity the typical iguana attitude can come out in full force and may never go away. As this is completely normal, it is important to learn your reptile's personality and how to notice what temper it may be in and how to go about handling it if necessary. Usually the adults will protest, but calm down with gentle coaxing and no constricting of the reptile on the human's part.

We as pet owners need to remember reptiles are different from cats and dogs and need to be treated differently. If they do not want to be handled, then it's best to not stress the animal unless needed. Iguanas being so large can hurt you by default on accident, they have large claws, are known to tail whip in defense and death roll while biting. They require an understanding owner who will take the animal's needs into constant consideration. Even with your deepest efforts they may not ever be "tame" but this is why they make a magnificent display animal.

The Dude Abides.

-E. Grosenheider