

Amazon Tree Boa (*Corallus hortulanus*)

Difficulty: Hard



Amazon tree boas are fully-arboreal snakes found throughout most of the northern half of South America. They are most abundant in humid tropical forests, particularly near rivers, but have also been found in dry forests and savanna. They spend the majority of their time up off of the ground, among the trees where their camouflage serves them best.

These snakes are known to be active during both night and day. Like other snakes, Amazon tree boas are carnivorous, and they use this time to opportunistically hunt a variety of prey, including birds, frogs, lizards, rodents, marsupials, and bats.

Amazon tree boas generally grow to around 5' long, with males and females being similarly sized, but some individuals have been known to get as big as 7.25'. They can also be recognized by their slim body, relatively large heads, vertical pupils, and prominent heat pits along their lips and snout. However, this species is best known for its eye-catching coloration and patterning, which may be brown, gray, yellow, orange, or red, with a strong pattern or none at all.

Amazon tree boas are sensitive in captivity and don't make good pets for people who are new to reptiles. However, with appropriate care, these species can be expected to live up to 18 years or longer.

What You Need for a Bioactive Amazon Tree Boa Enclosure:

- 5'L x 2.5'W x 4'H front-opening enclosure, or larger
- [Exo Terra Reptile Deep Dome Fixture Small](#), x4
- [Arcadia Halogen Heat Lamp, 50w](#), x2
- [Arcadia Deep Heat Projector 50w](#), x2
- Zoo Med ReptiTemp Rheostat, x2
- [Arcadia Forest D3 6% UVB T5 Bulb 34"](#)
- [The Bio Dude Solar Grow T5 HO Single Bulb Light Strip 36"](#) (for UVB)
- [The Bio Dude Glow & Grow 22" lamp](#), x2
- [Terra Firma Bioactive Kit 5' x 2' x 2'](#)
- [Ball Python Clean-Up Crew Pack](#)
- [Terra Firma Premium Plant Kit, 40 breeder](#), x2
- [Exo Terra Mister](#)
- [Zoo Med Repti Fogger Terrarium Humidifier](#)
- [Exo Terra Corner Water Dish, X-Large](#)
- [Cork Bark Branch 24" - 32"](#), x4
- [Cork tubes](#)
- [Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer](#), x2
- [Repashy Calcium Plus](#)
- [Zoo Med Stainless Steel 10" Curved Feeding Tongs](#)

Terrarium Size

When it comes to choosing a terrarium for pet reptiles, keep in mind that larger is always better! For optimum well-being, Amazon tree boas should be housed in an enclosure that at the very least allows them to thermoregulate efficiently and stretch out to their full length as desired. **The minimum enclosure size recommended for housing one average Amazon tree boa is at least 5'L x 2.5'W x 4'H.** Naturally, larger individuals will require more space. Where possible, it's always best to provide a larger enclosure than the minimum!

Multiple Amazon tree boas should not be housed in the same enclosure.

Lighting

Although Amazon tree boas are known to be active during both day and night, they are still likely to benefit from having a light in their enclosure to regulate their day/night cycle. **Lights should be on for 13 hours/day during summer and 11 hours/day during winter**, or you can sync them with your local sunrise and sunset times.

UVB Lighting

In fact, because Amazon tree boas are known to be active during the day, it's especially important to give them access to high-quality UVB lighting of appropriate strength for them to use as desired.

Therefore **we recommend installing a Zoo Med T5 HO ReptiSun 5.0 or Arcadia Forest 6% in a reflective T5 HO fluorescent fixture**, long enough to cover about 1/2 of the enclosure's length and placed on the same side as the heat lamps. For a 5' long enclosure, you will want a bulb 22-34" long. Do not use other brands — when it comes to UVB, *brand matters!*

If your enclosure has a mesh top, it's best to install the UVB fixture on top of the enclosure. If it does not, it's best to also install a mesh lamp guard such as the Arcadia LampGuardPro over it so the snake can't come in direct contact with the bulb. In both cases, in order to achieve a basking UVI of 2.0-3.0, the basking branch must be 9-11" below the UVB lamp.

Plant Lighting

In a bioactive setup, you will also need high-quality lighting to support your plants' growth and long-term health! For best results, use the Bio Dude Glow & Grow LED or Arcadia JungleDawn LED Bar, long enough to span at least most of the enclosure's length. Multiple lamps may be needed.

Heating

Because Amazon tree boas are reptiles, they need a range of temperatures within their enclosure so they can regulate their own body temperature as needed. Areas of heat speed up their metabolism and promote activities like digestion and healing. Cool areas slow the metabolism and promote activities like rest and energy conservation.

Your boa's basking area should be between around 88-92°F, and the cool side should be between 75-77°F. The basking lamps should be turned off at night, but temperatures should not drop below 75-77°F.

To create a suitable basking area for your Amazon tree boa, as well as keep comfortable ambient temps, you will need a cluster of at least two halogen flood heat bulbs like the 50w Arcadia Halogen or Zoo Med Repti Tuff in two 5.5" dome heat lamps. Plug each heat lamp into a rheostat or dimming thermostat so you can control them if they get too hot. To create an appropriate temperature gradient, place the heat lamps on the extreme right or left of the enclosure.

To monitor the temperatures in your boa's enclosure, place a digital probe thermometer in the basking area, and another in the shade in the middle of the setup.

If you need help maintaining the right ambient and/or nighttime temps, use a lightless heat source like an Arcadia Deep Heat Projector or radiant heat panel so as to not disturb your snake at night. This must be connected to a dimming thermostat to prevent your snake's environment from getting dangerously warm.

Humidity

Amazon tree boas are a tropical species, so they need humid air in their environment in order to stay hydrated, keep their lungs healthy, and shed their skin properly. To be specific, it's best to keep their environment between 40-100%, with **average humidity levels of 60-80%**. Keep track of your humidity

levels with a digital hygrometer like the Bio Dude Digital Thermometer/Hygrometer, with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure.

To accomplish this, you will need to mist the enclosure 2x/a day with a pressure sprayer like the Exo Terra Mister. It also helps to provide a “humid hide” lined with damp sphagnum moss, which should be the most humid spot in the enclosure. Since you have a bioactive enclosure you may not have to worry about the moss getting moldy, but make sure to check on it regularly and replace it as needed. It’s also helpful to install a reptile humidifier/fogger to replicate the spike in humidity that naturally occurs at night. (To prevent your snake from getting sick, make sure to disinfect the fogger frequently and use distilled water!)

One of the nice things about bioactive setups is that the live plants help maintain healthy humidity levels! Make sure to water your plants at appropriate intervals to keep them healthy.

Substrate

To create a bioactive Amazon tree boa terrarium, you will need a bioactive-compatible substrate. That means things like coconut husk or cypress mulch aren’t going to work. You need a soil-like mix that mimics the conditions of your boa’s forest home. You can make your own with 2 parts organic topsoil, 2 parts coconut fiber, and 1 part play sand, or you can let The Bio Dude do the work for you with a Terra Firma Bioactive Kit for 5' x 2' x 2'.

Because you’re setting up a bioactive habitat, you will need to mix and layer the substrate with sphagnum moss and plenty of leaf litter. For best results, combine with an appropriate amount of Bio Dude Bio Shot soil inoculant.

Finally, in order to make the substrate functional, make sure to add tropical CUC organisms like dairy cow isopods, powder blue/orange isopods, dwarf isopods, and tropical springtails. You can also add other species like super worms, earthworms, and millipedes!

Decorating the Enclosure

Enclosure décor is more than just making your setup look nice. It’s also an important part of providing *environmental enrichment* to your Amazon tree boa, which enhances your pet’s quality of life by providing opportunities to express natural behaviors, explore, and exercise.

Here are some ideas for ways that you can decorate and enrich your boa’s bioactive enclosure:

- ledges
- cork tubes
- sturdy branches (placed horizontally and diagonally)
- arboreal hides
- plants
- misc. décor

When choosing live plants for your Amazon tree boa vivarium, you don't have to worry about whether or not they're edible, but you do need to worry about whether they are large and sturdy enough to handle your boa's weight. The good news is that Amazon tree boas are relatively light snakes, but you still need to be careful! Here are some of the best plants for Amazon tree boas:

- Creeping fig
- Croton
- Dracaena
- Fiddle-leaf fig
- Green ivy
- Philodendron
- Pothos
- Rubber tree
- Sansevieria (snake plant)
- Schefflera (umbrella tree)
- sheet moss

Purchasing your plants larger rather than smaller may be more expensive, but it also increases their likelihood of survival.

Feeding Your Amazon Tree Boa

Amazon tree boas are obligate carnivores, which means that they *must* eat whole animals in order to get the nutrition they need. There is no replacement. Here is a rough sketch of how much and how often you should be feeding your boa, based on snake age.

- Juveniles: 1x/week
- Adults: every other week

Always feed your snake inside its enclosure, not outside. Contrary to the myth, feeding inside does not make snakes more aggressive. However, use feeding tweezers to offer the prey, not your hand, in order to prevent accidental strikes.

Variety is essential to complete nutrition. Aside from the usual mice and rats, you can add variety to your boa's diet with African soft-furred rats, hamsters, gerbils, chicks, quail, and Reptilinks. Prey items should be no larger than 1.5x the snake at its widest point. Do not offer live prey if it can be avoided, as live rodents may injure your snake in the process of feeding. Instead, buy frozen prey and thaw to ~100°F internal temperature in a plastic bag in warm water.

Supplements

Snakes usually don't need mineral or vitamin supplements to survive, but they can be helpful for preemptively correcting any developing deficiencies and keeping your pet in tip-top shape. Once a month or every other month, sprinkle a bit of all-in-one calcium and multivitamin powder on your boa's meal.

Water

Your Amazon tree boa will probably get most of its hydration from drinking droplets left over on leaves and enclosure walls after each misting session. However, it's still important to provide a constant supply of clean drinking water via a water bowl for the snake to use as desired. Drinking water should always be kept fresh, and the bowl should be scrubbed and disinfected with veterinary-grade disinfectant every week.

Handling Tips

Generally speaking, Amazon tree boas are not the kind of pet that you should plan on being able to handle regularly. Although there are always exceptions, these snakes largely prefer to be left alone, which makes them a great option for a display animal. Wild-caught Amazon tree boas are notorious for being especially defensive, and juveniles tend to be nervous/nippy as well.

If you're worried about being bitten during routine enclosure maintenance, wear a pair of leather gloves, and if you need to move the snake, use a snake hook.

Care information courtesy of [ReptiFiles](#).