

Children's Python (*Antaresia childreni*)

Difficulty: Low



Children's pythons are terrestrial snakes distributed throughout northern Australia, including parts of Northern Territory, Western Australia, and Queensland. In the wild they are quite adaptable, living in a range of different habitats from moist coastal areas to drier desert areas. They can be found in monsoon forest, dry woodland, savanna, grassland, rocky outcrops, termite mounds, and even caves. They like to hide under clumps of grass and surface debris, but they will also hang out in tree hollows.

Children's pythons are small snakes, capable of growing up to 40" long, but usually 30-36", making them one of the smallest snakes in the world! They are typically pale to reddish brown in color, with lighter coloration toward the belly. They are marked with much darker brown, roughly circular blotches that are usually prominent on juveniles but faded on adults.

These snakes are crepuscular, being most active in early evening. They are opportunistic carnivores with a diverse diet, and use this time to hunt mammal, amphibian, and reptile prey — including small bats! Lizards are reported to be a special favorite of juveniles.

Children's pythons are named after John George Children, a curator of the British Museum's herpetological collection, not because they make particularly good pets for children. That said, this species can be a highly convenient pet snake due to their small size and hardy nature. Expect this pet to live 20-30 years with good care.

What You Need for a Bioactive Children's Python Enclosure:

- 36"L x 18"W x 18"H front-opening enclosure, or larger
- [Exo Terra Reptile Deep Dome Fixture Small](#)
- [50w Arcadia Halogen Heat Lamp](#)
- Plug-in lamp dimmer
- [Arcadia ShadeDweller MAX UVB kit](#)
- [Bio Dude Glow & Grow 22" LED](#)
- [36x18x18 Terra Firma Bioactive Kit](#)
- [Terra Firma Premium Plant Kit, 40 breeder](#)
- [Ball Python Clean Up Crew Pack](#)
- [Exo Terra 2qt Pressure Sprayer Mister](#)
- [The Bio Dude Terra Bowl, small](#)
- [Cork logs](#)
- [Cork flats](#)
- 2+ [hides/caves](#)
- [Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer, x2](#)
- [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! Although Children's pythons may not be as active as some other species, they still need enough plenty of room to stretch out and explore as desired. According to "The Complete Children's Python " by Justin Julander, this species has been known to be capable of traveling up to 300 meters in a single night! **The minimum enclosure size recommended for housing one Children's python is 36"L x 18"W x 18"H**, but larger is always recommended if you have the space for it and the space is used well.

If the enclosure is large enough, Children's pythons can be kept in groups. A pair can be kept in a 36x18x18 or larger, but a trio must be housed in at least a 48"L x 24"W x 24"H enclosure. Do not house males and females together unless you are ready to breed this species.

Lighting

Children's pythons may be crepuscular (most active at night and in the evening), but they still benefit from having specialized lighting equipment as part of their setup. Although they are capable of surviving without UVB lighting, it's best practice to include it as part of the snake's setup so it can still reap the benefits. Our goal as good reptile keepers is not to simply allow our pets to survive — it is to do everything in our power to enable them to thrive. And there is mounting scientific evidence that UVB is, in fact, beneficial to night-active species.

Therefore **we recommend installing the Arcadia ShadeDweller MAX UVB kit**. 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. The closest distance between a Children's python and its UVB lamp (basking distance) should be approximately 6-8", as UVB intensity varies with distance from the bulb.

If you have a Solarmeter 6.5, the UVI level in the basking area should be 2.0-3.0.

Because you're setting up a bioactive enclosure, you will also need a bright plant grow light — the light from your UVB lamp alone is NOT enough for thriving plants! We recommend the Bio Dude Glow & Grow LED or Arcadia JungleDawn LED, long enough to span at least most of the enclosure's length. All lamps should be on for about **13 hours/day during summer and 11 hours/day during winter**, with gradual transitions in between.

Heating

Because Children's pythons 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 Children's python should have a basking surface temperature of 90-100°F, and the cool side should be between 75-80°F. Create a basking area by placing a platform or sturdy log below the lamps. Heating equipment should be turned off at night so temperatures can drop during this time.

Many snake keepers recommend using heat mats for heat, but heat mats generally don't work well in a bioactive enclosure. Instead, use a halogen flood heat bulb like the 50w Arcadia Halogen Basking Spot in small dome heat lamp. Plug the lamp into a lamp dimmer or dimming thermostat so you can prevent it from getting too hot. But if you're not getting enough heat, switch to 75w for more power.

To monitor the temperatures in your snake's enclosure, place on digital probe thermometer in the basking area, and another on the floor of the cool end.

Humidity

Children's pythons are highly adaptable and have been known to do well anywhere **between 20-80% humidity**, ranging lower during the day and higher at night. The priority is to provide access to a humid hide and a bowl of fresh water at all times.

The humid hide should be placed on the cool half of the enclosure and lined with moistened sphagnum moss or substrate to create an area of higher humidity for the snake to use as needed. The water bowl should be roughly the same size as your snake's coiled body, but not too deep. Always keep it clean, and scrub it with veterinary disinfectant weekly.

Don't forget to water your plants as needed!

Substrate

To create a Children's python vivarium, you will need a bioactive-compatible substrate. That means things like aspen shavings or bark chips aren't going to work. You need a soil-like mix that mimics the conditions of your snake's natural habitat. You can make your own with a base of 60% plain topsoil and 40% play sand mixed with bark, gravel, sphagnum moss, leaf litter, and Bio Dude Bio Shot soil inoculant, but this can be tricky to get right in the long-term.

For more peace of mind, you can **let The Bio Dude do the work for you with the Terra Firma Bioactive Kit!**

Finally, in order to make the substrate functional, you need to add hardy CUC organisms like powder blue/orange isopods, giant canyon isopods, and springtails. You can also add other species like superworms or blue death-feigning beetles.

Make sure to give your plants and CUC at least 1 month so they can get established before your pet moves in!

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 Children's python, which enhances your pet's quality of life by providing opportunities to express natural behaviors, explore, and exercise. In other words, décor is not optional — it's just as important as the other equipment mentioned in this care sheet for creating a functional reptile enclosure!

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

- hollow logs
- bark flats
- hides/caves
- plants
- misc. décor

Children's pythons like to hide in leaf litter, so it's a good idea to give them a thick layer of leaf litter or mulch on top of the substrate to burrow around in. Since they like to hide in tree hollows, you may also find that your snake enjoys an elevated hide mounted on the ceiling of the setup!

Feeding Your Children's Pythons

Children's pythons 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 snake, based on age:

- **Juveniles should be fed once every 5-7 days.**
- **Adults should be fed once every 7-14 days.**

An appropriately-sized meal should be slightly larger than the snake at its widest point, or about 10% of its weight.

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 bites.

Variety is essential to complete nutrition and may also help prevent feeding “strikes.” Aside from the usual mice and rats, you can add variety to your snake’s diet with hamsters, gerbils, chicks, quail, anoles, house geckos, and Reptilinks. However, do not offer live prey if it can be avoided. Frozen feeders should be completely thawed to 75-100°F before offering.

Handling Tips

After bringing your new pet home, do not handle it until it is eating regularly. This can take anywhere from two weeks to two months, so be patient and use this time to make sure your husbandry is on point. Once your snake is ready for handling, handle it at least 1-2x weekly to keep it accustomed to you, but no more than once daily. Handling is also a good way to encourage your snake to exercise and provide additional enrichment!

Wash Your Hands First

Before you pick up your snake, first wash your hands with soap or hand sanitizer. This removes potentially harmful bacteria, viruses, or parasites from your hands, as well as makes your hands smell distinctly inedible.

How to Pick Up a Snake

Next, use a paper towel roll to tap its head (gently). This sets expectations by letting the snake know that it’s time for handling, not food. Pick it up with two hands, one behind the head and one supporting the rest of the body. NEVER pick up a snake by its tail — this can really hurt their spine!

Safety with Snakes

Always supervise children closely when they are handling a pet snake (or any kind of pet, frankly). This is as much for the snake’s safety as it is for the child’s. Keep the snake’s head away from your face, and always wash your hands and arms with soap or hand sanitizer after handling.

DO NOT Handle If...

Don’t handle your snake within 48 hours of a meal, as this can stress them out and lead to regurgitation, which is a traumatic experience that can actually lead to death. Also do not handle if your pet’s eyes have turned opaque or cloudy. This means that the snake is preparing to shed and can’t see well, making them more jumpy than usual and more likely to bite out of self-defense.

Care information courtesy of [ReptiFiles](#).