

# Gargoyle Gecko care sheet and maintenance.

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## **Gargoyle Gecko (*Rhacodactylus auriculatus*)**

### **Difficulty: Easy**

Gargoyle geckos are medium-sized arboreal geckos native to New Caledonia, where they can be found among the trees and vines of its tropical rainforests. Since gargoyle geckos are arboreal, they are very rarely found on the ground.

Gargoyle geckos are *crepuscular*, which means that they are primary active at night — particularly around dusk. As *frugivores*, they use much of this time to search for fruits to eat, as well as to hunt insects.

Gargoyle geckos are generally 6-8" long, with a 15-20 year lifespan with good care. Their general hardiness, simple care, and manageable size makes them a popular choice among first-time reptile owners.

## What You Need for a Bioactive Gargoyle Gecko Enclosure

- Front-opening 18" x 18" x 24" glass terrarium
- [25w Zoo Med Basking Spot Lamp](#)
- [Exo Terra Reptile Glow Light, small](#)
- Front-opening 18" x 18" x 24" glass terrarium (You will need a larger enclosure such as 24" x 18" x 36" for adults).
- Plug-in lamp dimmer
- [Arcadia Shade Dweller 2.4% replacement bulb](#)
- [Bio Dude Solar Grow T5 HO Single Bulb Light Strip, 12" \(to house UVB bulb\)](#)
- [BioDude Glow and Grow 16" LED](#)
- [Zilla 24/7 Digital Timer Power Center](#)
- Temp gun
- [Exo Terra 2qt Mister](#)
- [Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer](#)
- [Crested Gecko Bioactive Habitat kit](#)
- [Bio Dude Crested Gecko Clean Up Crew Pack](#)
- [Bio Dude Crested Gecko Starter Plant Pack](#)
- Vines
- Branches
- [BioDude Lizard Ledge](#), x2
- Small gecko feeding cups
- Crested gecko diet powder
- [Repashy Calcium Plus](#)

### Terrarium Size

The minimum enclosure size recommended for housing a single gargoyle gecko is **18" L x 18" W x 24" H**. However, when it comes to choosing a terrarium for pet reptiles, keep in mind that larger is always better!

Particularly young geckos (<12g) tend to benefit from being temporarily housed in a smaller "grow out" enclosure until they are large enough to safely navigate an adult-sized enclosure.

As a general rule, gargoyle geckos should not be housed together in the same enclosure.

### Lighting

Technically speaking, gargoyle geckos can survive without UVB lighting — instead relying on crested gecko diet and supplements for their vitamin D3. However, this is not best practice, as UVB provides benefits beyond just vitamin D3 synthesis, such as: preventing illness, improving nervous and digestive function, and improving mental health.

In other words, we recommend installing appropriate UVB lighting as part of your gargoyle gecko's setup. The **12" Arcadia Shade Dweller 2.4%** is likely to work the best for a gargoyle gecko in a 18"x18"x24" enclosure. Position the basking branch no closer than 6" below the UVB lamp.

Your UVB bulb must be replaced every 12 months to maintain its output. Resist the temptation to use other, cheaper brands — when it comes to UVB, *brand matters!*

Because this is a bioactive setup, you will also need a plant light to encourage healthy plant growth. We recommend the **BioDude Glow and Grow 16" LED** for this purpose.

Both lighting and heating should be on for 12 hours/day.

## Heating

There is a common misconception that gargoyle geckos don't need a heat source, but this is false. Gargoyle geckos are still reptiles, which means that they are *poikilothermic*, and that means that 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.

Gargoyle gecko temperature gradient:

- **Basking area temperature:** 82-85°F
- **Cool zone temperature:** 70-75°F
- **Nighttime temperature:** 65-72°F

Ambient temperature should not be higher than 82°F, or else your gecko may get heat stroke!

To create a basking area for your gargoyle gecko, you will need a low-wattage white heat bulb like the **25w Zoo Med Basking Spot Lamp** and a fixture like small **Exo Terra Reptile Glow Light**. If the basking area gets too warm, you can plug the lamp into a lamp dimmer like the **Lutron Credenza** and reduce the heat that way. If the basking area is too cool, you will need a higher-wattage bulb.

The most accurate way to keep track of your terrarium's temperature gradient is to use a temperature gun like the **Etekcity 774**. However, because temperature guns are best at measuring surface temperature, it is best to also use a digital probe thermometer like the **Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer** to gauge air temperature at the basking spot. You can do this by zip-tying the probe to the basking branch directly under the lamps.

## Humidity

Gargoyle geckos need a high humidity environment. To be specific, they need an **average of 60-80% humidity**. Keep track of your humidity levels with a digital

hygrometer like the **Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer**, with the probe secured to a branch in the middle of the enclosure, preferably in a shaded area.

To raise humidity in your gecko's enclosure and provide a source of drinking water, use an **Exo Terra 2qt Mister** to wet things down every morning and evening, preferably when it's dark. If you need help increasing humidity, you can run a fogger/cool mist humidifier at night.

## Substrate

A thick layer of bioactive-compatible substrate is essential to creating a bioactive gargoyle gecko enclosure.

First, layer ~2" of clay balls or **Bio Dude HydroGrow** drainage material and place a layer of **tight mesh** on top to help prevent soil from getting into the drainage layer.

Next you will need a soil-like mix that mimics the conditions of a tropical rainforest and will nourish your plants. If you want to make your own, you will need a mixture of 50% organic topsoil, 25% peat moss, and 25% play sand. Mix that with leaf litter, sphagnum moss, and 3 doses of **6qt Bio Shot** to inoculate your soil with beneficial microfauna. This layer of soil should be as deep as possible.

Alternatively, you can let The Bio Dude do the work for you with **The Bio Dude's Terra Fauna 18x18x24 bioactive substrate kit**.

To make the substrate functional, make sure to add tropical CUC organisms like powder blue/orange isopods, dwarf isopods, and arid springtails. You can also add other species like dubia roaches, earthworms, and millipedes!

## Decorating the Enclosure

Enclosure décor is more than just making your setup look good. It's also an important part of providing *environmental enrichment* to your gargoyle, which enhances your pet's quality of life by providing opportunities to express natural behaviors. Considering that gargoyle geckos are arboreal, two of their most important natural behaviors are climbing and hiding, which means that you will need lots of **branches, vines, and foliage** to fulfill that need. Don't be afraid to clutter it up!

Live plants in particular are critical to helping your mini-ecosystem function properly.

## Feeding Your Gargoyle Gecko

Gargoyle geckos are omnivores. Specifically speaking, they primarily feed on fruit and insects. As pets, however, they do best on a diet of specially formulated crested gecko diet powder (CGD) and live insects. Here is a quick feeding schedule you can reference:

- **Hatchlings and Juveniles (0-12 months)** — CGD daily, insects 1-2x/week
- **Adults (>12 months)** — CGD every 2-3 days, insects 1x/week

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for any reptile is VARIETY! Here's a quick list of foods that are safe to feed to your gargoyle gecko:

Best crested gecko diet powders: Pangea, Repashy, Black Panther Zoological, Gecko Pro, Leapin' Leachie, Zoo Med

Best insects: crickets, dubia roaches, red runner roaches, darkling beetles, snails, grasshoppers

Gargoyle geckos are slightly carnivorous and offering a thawed pinkie mouse or anole makes for a nutritious treat.

### **Supplements**

Although feeder insects should be gut loaded for 24-48 hours prior to feeding, they will also need to be "dusted" with an appropriate supplement powder just before. There are many options, but **Arcadia CalciumPro Mg** and **MinerAll Outdoor** are both solid D3-free calcium supplements. For best results, use as directed by the label.

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