

## Checklist

Before purchase make sure that:

- 1 You have the appropriate equipment and position for the aquarium.
- 2 You have researched all the species you are interested in and your final choices are all compatible.
- 3 You are familiar with how to transport and release your fish.
- 4 You are aware of the daily, weekly and monthly maintenance your aquarium will require.
- 5 You are prepared to look after your fish properly for the duration of their life.

## Equipment

- 1 Glass or plastic aquarium
- 2 Gravel cleaner
- 3 Water testing kit
- 4 Tap water conditioner
- 5 Gravel
- 6 Filter
- 7 Food
- 8 Heater and thermometer

Before purchase make sure:

- 1 The aquarium is of a suitable size
- 2 Water parameters are as advised in this leaflet
- 3 If adding to existing set-up ensure these fish are compatible.



### Never release your aquarium animals or plants into the wild

Never release an animal or plant bought for a home aquarium into the wild. It is illegal and for most fish species this will lead to an untimely and possibly lingering death because they are not native to this country. Any animals or plants that do survive might be harmful to the environment.

### Important things to remember

#### Always buy...

test kits and regularly check the water for ammonia, nitrite, nitrate and pH. This will allow you to make sure the water in your aquarium is not causing welfare problems for your fish.

#### Establish a routine...

for testing the water in your aquarium. Record your results to enable you to highlight fluctuations quickly. Also check the temperature of the water.

#### Maintain...

the water in the aquarium within the accepted parameters highlighted in this leaflet. You may need to do regular water changes to achieve this.

#### Always wash your hands...

making sure to rinse off all soap residues, before putting them into your aquarium. Wash your hands again afterwards and certainly before eating, drinking or smoking.

#### Never siphon by mouth...

A fish tank can harbour bacteria which can be harmful if swallowed. Buy a specially designed aquarium gravel cleaner which can be started without the need to place the siphon in your mouth.



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How to care for...



## Barbs

23 Tropical freshwater fish



# Introduction

Barbs make an active addition to an aquarium. However, some of them can be aggressive and are notorious fin nippers. These species originate from Asia and belong to the order Cypriniformes.

## Water requirements

This group of fish are relatively hardy and will adapt to most aquarium water. However, it is advisable to keep the water parameters within the following guidelines although fish may acclimatise to different water conditions over time.

**Temperature:** 20 to 27°C

**pH:** 6.0 to 7.5

**Ammonia:** 0mg/l (0.02mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

**Nitrite:** 0mg/l (0.2mg/l may be tolerated for short periods)

**Hardness:** moderately soft to hard (5 to 19°dH)

## Biology

The species most often found in the aquarium trade belong to the genus *Puntius*. The majority of these fish are not large, although there are exceptions such as the Tinfoil barb which grows quickly and has potential to reach 35cm in aquariums.

Smaller barbs (such as Tiger, Rosy, Cherry and Ruby barbs) grow to between 5 to 10cm. Females are slightly larger than the males.

Tiger barbs are among the top 10 most popular aquarium species. There are different colour variations available including Albino and Green. The males can be distinguished via a reddish nose and red line across the tip of the dorsal fin.

In the wild these are active shoaling fish and in the aquarium they need to be kept in groups of four for five, which may also help to lessen aggression towards other fish.

These fish can live for 4 to 5 years in a home aquarium in which the water quality is well maintained.

## Aquarium requirements

As these fish should be kept in shoals, a tank of at least 45 litres is recommended. However, adult Tinfoil barbs require a much larger tank of at least 250 litres. Keeping these fish by themselves or in pairs is not advised. They can quickly become stressed which can lead to aggression towards other tank mates or the outbreak of disease.

There should be a large swimming space provided in the tank as these fish are very active. Due to the nature and fast metabolism of these fish, the level of dissolved oxygen should be high, especially when keeping the larger species such as the Tinfoil. This can be achieved through the addition of an air pump and air stones or venturi power heads.

A heater and filter are also required. Ideally the water should be soft and slightly acidic, this mimics the rivers and streams in which they can be found in the wild. If you need to change your water parameters this should be done slowly over several weeks to avoid stressing the fish.

Barbs are fairly hardy fish and have a preference for water which is in the range of 20 to 27°C. Aquarium lighting and a secure lid is beneficial as these fast swimmers may leap from the water from time to time.

## Maintenance

At least once every two weeks a partial water change of 25 to 30% is strongly recommended (a siphon device is useful to remove waste from the gravel). The water should be tested regularly to ensure pollutants such as ammonia and nitrites do not build up. Ensure you either allow the replacement water to stand or aerate it to remove any chlorine present. Ideally treat all replacement water with tap water conditioner before adding to the aquarium.

Filters should be checked for clogging and blockages. If the filter needs cleaning then do not run it under the tap, any chlorine present may kill the beneficial bacterial population that has established in the media. Instead it can be rinsed in the tank water which is removed during a partial water change, this reduces the amount of bacteria which are lost.

Good husbandry is essential as these fish can be stressed by even the smallest amounts of ammonia and nitrite. Test the water to monitor the ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels every week, especially during initial set-up and after adding extra fish.

## Feeding

The majority of these fish are omnivorous, happily feeding upon worms, crustaceans, insects and plant matter. The exception is the Tinfoil barb which prefers a vegetable diet.

These fish will readily accept most aquarium foods. However, if keeping the Tinfoil barbs be aware that live plants may be eaten. Their diet should consist of a good quality tropical flake or pellet which should be supplemented with live and frozen foods. These fish should be fed what they can eat within a few minutes 1 to 2 times a day. Remove any uneaten food to reduce waste build-up.

## Potential problems

A water quality problem will affect fish behaviour and can be shown by clamped fins, reduced feeding, erratic swimming and gasping at the surface. Immediately test the water if any of these symptoms are shown. If in doubt ask your OATA retailer for advice.

## Compatibility

Tiger barbs are particularly aggressive fin nippers and therefore should not be kept with any more timid or long finned species.

Tinfoil barbs are not aggressive by nature but due to their size should not be kept with small fish species which would fit into their mouth and be swallowed.

Other barb species are suitable for most community aquariums. However they also can all display a certain amount of aggression if not kept in shoals. All may nip the fins of other species especially those which swim more slowly or which have longer fins.

## Breeding

Barbs are among the easier fish species, particularly the Tiger barbs, to breed. Barbs produce large numbers of fry after successful spawning. A larger aquarium is required if you plan to keep the fry alive especially as the adults will eat them voraciously.

The male and female fish should be placed into a breeding tank with a spawning mop. Once spawning has occurred remove the adults as they will eat the eggs. The fry should hatch within three or four days.