



CONCISE CARE SHEETS

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**DYEING
DART FROG**

INTRO

Dendrobates tinctorius is known as the Dyeing Dart Frog because it is highly variable and colorful, with some forms looking like they were splashed by vivid colors of ink. Breeders and hobbyists often simply refer to them as "Tincs." This is one of the largest of the dart frogs. Whereas most species barely reach an inch, and eat nothing much larger than a fruit fly, an adult Dyeing Dart Frog can be two inches in length and will eat two-week old crickets or larger prey. This species is distributed across northern South America from Venezuela to parts of Guyana, Suriname, Brazil, and nearly all of French Guiana.

GENERAL CARE & FEEDING

Most keepers house poison dart frogs in naturalistic vivaria with live plants and little to no ventilation. *Dendrobates tinctorius* inhabits humid tropical rainforests, so replicating that habitat in captivity is ideal. Live plants should be used, and actually help to keep the environment clean. Provide 10 gallons or more of space per adult frog. Vitamin-dusted flightless fruit flies are the standard fare for dart frogs, but adult *Dendrobates tinctorius* are large enough to consume pinhead to one-week old crickets as well as other small insect larvae like Phoenix worms and fly maggots, plus springtails and isopods.

HOUSING

As mentioned above, the standard dart frog terrarium is planted with many live tropical plants and has very little if any ventilation. This keeps the humidity up and the fruit flies in. Very fine micro-mesh is usually necessary to cover the ventilation that is provided. These are big frogs and about ten gallons of space per adult is necessary so many keepers choose to use 20H aquariums or similarly-sized terrariums to house a pair or trio.

The substrate should start with a two-inch base layer of hydroton (clay aggregate used in hydroponic gardening), followed by substrate barrier such as fabric screen, then a well-draining substrate replicating forest soil that is two or three inches deep. A very popular substrate is called ABG after the Atlanta Botanical Garden that created it. It is a precise mixture of charcoal, milled sphagnum moss, fir bark, tree fern, and peat. On top of this, long fiber sphagnum is placed in a thin layer, followed by a hearty coating of leaf litter. The substrate can be seeded with various species of microfauna, including springtails and isopods. These scavengers will keep the terrarium clean.

Dart frogs are very sensitive to excessive heat and will not tolerate high temperatures. For the most part, *Dendrobates tinctorius* needs to be kept above 60°F and below 80°F, with an ideal temperature in the low-to-mid 70s.

CLEANING

Springtails and isopods are not only great food sources for dart frogs, but many species can be effective cleaners for the terrarium. Different species are sometimes used for food, with larger ones use for cleaning. A well-established naturalistic vivarium makes cleaning an infrequent need. Overly saturated substrate is the biggest problem and will lead to foul odors and unsanitary conditions. A properly maintained terrarium might go without substrate replacement for years. As the leaf litter placed on the surface breaks down, it should be replaced. This might only be necessary every six months or so. Dried oak leaves will last a long time. Online terrarium specialty stores offer excellent choices for both substrate and leaf litter, but you can also collect your own if you take care to ensure ants or other undesirable insects or bacteria isn't placed in the terrarium.

Plants will need to be trimmed to keep them from outgrowing the vivarium, and the front glass will need to be wiped down periodically with a paper towel to remove any algae or debris that collects there. All of the inside surfaces of the vivarium (including plant leaves, wood, glass) should be sprayed down with a hand mister once to twice a month.

QUICK TIPS

- » 60-80°F, with ideal temps in the low to mid 70s
- » Keep humidity high with no drafts
- » Requires well-planted tropical terrarium with little or no ventilation

HANDLING & ACTIVITY

Like all amphibians, dart frogs of any kind should not be handled. Their sensitive skins can be damaged by abrasions from your skin, and they absorb toxins from your skin, and they absorb toxins such as oils and household chemicals from your skin. Captive dart frogs lose their own poisonous skin toxins, but they still should never be handled. They are fragile terrarium pets that should be observed and not interacted with.

Dart frogs are diurnal and will feed throughout the day. Many keepers will give them several small meals at different times throughout the day. Care should be exercised, however, to not offer too much food. All food should be dusted with vitamins and occasionally calcium powder, and the prey should be consumed while it is still coated with the beneficial nutrients.

HEALTH

Properly maintained dart frogs rarely encounter health problems, and any that might occur would be very difficult to treat. The most important thing with any amphibian is using dechlorinated water that is clean and pure. Reverse osmosis water is popular with many keepers.