

CONCISE CARE SHEETS

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Pet Health and Happiness Is Our Primary Concern

G I A N T D A Y G E C K O



INTRO

This beautiful and large bright green gecko is native to tropical and subtropical forests in northern Madagascar, but has been introduced elsewhere. It is active during the daytime and forages for both a variety of insects and other invertebrates and nectar. Large specimens may also include very small vertebrates in their diet.

Day geckos are highly territorial and defend themselves vigorously. They must be housed alone except for when paired for mating attempts. Males are very rough on females during mating. The scaly skin is very delicate and breeding pairs often have wounds and scars. Day geckos are too fast and nervous to be held in the hand and their skin easily sloughs leaving wounds that may become infected and become scars.

Phelsuma grandis was once treated as a subspecies of the *madagascariensis* clade, but taxonomists elevated the Great Madagascan Giant Day Gecko to species status in 2007. "Grandis" is Latin for "great".

GENERAL CARE & FEEDING

Giant Day Geckos require a large tropical terrarium with numerous perches and branches. They thrive in well-planted naturalistic terrariums, which should be vertically oriented to accommodate their arboreal habits. Bamboo is a popular perch among day gecko breeders and both horizontal and diagonal branches at least the girth of the gecko must be provided. Day geckos that are housed in glass terrariums without sufficient horizontal perches tend to rest on the glass sides with their heads down and develop "floppy tail syndrome" where the base of the tail atrophies and the gecko can no longer hold its tail straight.

Giant Day Geckos are omnivorous. They eat any small invertebrates they can catch, but also lick soft fruits, pollen and nectar. Large specimens have been known to occasionally prey on very small vertebrates and both wild and captive Giant Day Geckos have been observed eating their newly hatched young. Most breeders offer insects like crickets or roaches that have been dusted with a reptile multivitamin once or twice a week and offer a prepared day gecko diet fruit baby food mix every other day in a shallow dish. Baby food jar lids make excellent dishes and a similar dish containing calcium powder should be kept in the cage at all times. Day geckos have "chalk sacs" in the backs of their throats where they store minerals and they will lick the dry calcium as needed to maintain their reserves. The dish of calcium should be removed only when misting the cage so that it is kept dry. Crickets and/or roaches should be gut-loaded with nutritious foods for twenty-four hours prior to being offered as prey and should be coated with a quality reptile vitamin supplement.

Giant Day Geckos are tropical lizards that require humidity in the 60-75% range. They may not drink from water dishes and most keepers mist the enclosures once or twice daily to provide both drinking water and elevated humidity. Breeders usually use automated misting systems to ensure sufficient moisture is provided.

HOUSING

Giant day gecko keepers favor either screen or glass enclosures measuring at least 24 inches tall by 24 inches long by 12 inches. Live plants will add to the naturalistic design and increase enclosure humidity. Both full spectrum natural fluorescent lighting [UVB reptile lamps are best] and an incandescent heat lamp should illuminate the enclosure for twelve daylight hours and be switched off by an automatic timer at night. A horizontal length of large diameter bamboo should be affixed so that it provides an ideal basking spot beneath an incandescent lamp. Daytime temperatures in the terrarium should range from 82-88°F and reach 95°F in the prime basking spot. During the dark of night temperature should fall no lower than 72-75°F.

Both horizontal and diagonally oriented perches are essential and several should be situated near basking lamp to allow for thermoregulation. As mentioned above, bamboo is a favorite natural branch of day gecko keepers. One-inch to two-inch diameter lengths are ideal and at least two level horizontal perches are recommended. Bamboo also can be cut to allow access to the hollow interior, which will become a favorite

QUICK TIPS

- » 82-86°F daytime with 95°F basking spot. 75-82°F at night.
- » Eats insects and nectar. Try special fortified day gecko mixes for optimal nutrition.
- » House alone except for mating period
- » **DO NOT TOUCH!**

egg laying space for breeding females. Snake plants (*Sansevieria*) and other inexpensive durable plants are popular in day gecko enclosures. They provide beauty, cover, climbing surfaces and essential humidity. They are usually left potted and the containers may be set into a substrate of peat, terrarium potting mixes or cypress mulch.

HANDLING & ACTIVITY

Giant Day Geckos are diurnal lizards that like to bask. They are highly territorial and will aggressively defend their turf. Males must never be housed together and females also may fight with each other. Unless very large enclosures are used, many breeders house all specimens individually and only introduce a female into a male's enclosure for brief pairings. Males grasp the female's neck in their mouth during copulation and often bite during courtship. In rare cases, males have killed females.

Giant Day Geckos are gorgeous terrarium specimens that are fast and nervous and best left alone. Their delicate skin can easily slough and handling is not advised.

HEALTH

Giant Day Geckos are hardy lizards that are easy to raise if their basic care and environmental concerns are met. As discussed in the feeding section, modern powdered mixes address their optimal health and are easy to use. Also mentioned is providing a shallow dish [jar cap] of reptile calcium so that the gecko can control its mineral reserves. It is recommended for both sexes, but is essential for egg-laying females.

The most common health problem is dead skin sticking to the gecko during sloughing (shedding). The distinctive foot pads that allow geckos to run up vertical glass tend to retain skin during shedding if the humidity is too low. Dead skin that is retained on the feet or tail can cause blood flow constriction and digits or tail tips may be lost. It is essential that moderately high humidity be maintained at all times and that cage misting is increased when signs of molting are observed. Due to the fragile scaly skin it is very difficult to restrain the gecko to remove remaining dead skin using forceps. If skin remains attached to the foot pads the best thing to do is place damp warm paper towel in a deli cup that is large enough to gently trap the gecko within. Allowing it to remain in this humid and moist environment for 10-15 minutes will make skin removal easier. For more information see <http://thegeckogeek.com/2012/08/03/common-shed-issues-how-to-safely-offer-your-gecko-a-helping-hand/>.

SEXING GIANT DAY GECKOS

Male giant day geckos have prominent femoral pores. These may be observed using a loupe in young animals, but become readily apparent at maturity. These pores excrete a waxy substance and older males usually exhibit the yellowish wax around the pores. The male hemipenes are also generally conspicuous as lateral bulges just posterior to the vent (cloaca). Adult females normally have large chalk sacs in the back of their throats that appear on the outside of the body as a bulge on each side of the neck.

