



CONCISE CARE SHEETS

find more caresheets at nwzoo.com/care

B R A Z I L I A N B L U E
[I R I D E S C E N T] T A R A N T U L A

INTRO

Known in the hobby as the Brazilian Blue or Iridescent Blue Tarantula, *Pterinopelma sazimai* is also occasionally called "Sazima's Tarantula". This latter name honors Ivan Sazima, a Brazilian zoologist who was the first researcher to collect museum specimens of this species in the 1970s and 1980s from the Bahia region of Brazil. Adult females of the species are a brilliant deep blue with reddish to mahogany hairs on the abdomen. Few tarantula species are as stunning as this. Only described by science in 2011, this colorful tarantula has quickly become one of the most coveted species in arachniculture.

Blue is a rare color among organisms and humans certainly fancy it. When this tarantula was "rediscovered" and published in 2011, international media sources printed the story of this brilliant blue tarantula from a remote, mountainous forest and it went viral. It was said that it was collected from a montane subtropical savanna eco-region in eastern Brazil known as the "campo rupestre". Here it was found atop rocky outcrops above 3000 feet (900m) in elevation in what could be called sky or ecological islands.

GENERAL CARE & ENVIRONMENT

The Brazilian Blue Tarantula is an obligate burrower that requires a tropical terrarium. Breeders normally provide a great depth of substrate so the spider can create a natural burrow, whereas some hobbyists provide only a few inches of soil and use a hollow log or similar for a retreat in order to facilitate occasional viewing.

As with most tarantulas, warm room temperatures in the 70-80°F range are adequate, temperatures exceeding 82°F should be avoided, and a nighttime drop to cooler temperature is tolerated.

Spiderling Iridescent Blue Tarantulas may be reared in 50 dram vials half filled with substrate or similar containers, juveniles may be housed in small plastic terrariums and adults require nothing larger than a ten gallon aquarium.

HOUSING

Young tarantulas can be started in 50 dram vials or similar jars, but we prefer to use 32 oz. deli cups with "fruit fly" lids to rear young spiders from spiderling to about 2.5" in legspan. Once the young tarantulas outgrow the deli cup they may be housed similarly in clear plastic storage containers or critter keeper style small enclosures.

Adult Brazilian Blue Tarantulas are moderately sized spiders and nothing larger than a ten gallon aquarium or a modern glass terrarium of similar dimensions is required. Greater floorspace will, however, allow for providing a couple of retreats and creating a moisture gradient where one end is semi-moist and the other is mostly dry.

Coconut coir is perhaps the best tarantula substrate and may be purchased loose or in compressed bricks that require soaking in water for expansion. The latter is used by most keepers as using the correct ratio of water to coir (generally 3 quarts per brick) results in perfectly moist substrate once it is mixed and allowed to dry a bit over an hour or so.

As mentioned above, the ideal enclosure has six-ten inches of substrate to allow for natural burrowing. The subterranean microenvironment of the burrow provides comfort and safety. However, display specimens may be kept on several inches of substrate provided that they are offered suitable retreats so that the tarantula can completely hide as it chooses. It will silk itself into this hide during the shedding process.

QUICK TIPS

- » 72-80°F with a drop in temperature at night (65-70°F) ideal but not necessary.
- » Requires 50-75% humidity, but also good ventilation.
- » Eats arthropods and small vertebrates and thrives on roaches or crickets in captivity.

Most keepers do not use heat sources and instead keep their tarantula enclosures in a warm room that is usually in the 70s. If necessary a heat mat is preferred to an incandescent heat lamp that will dry out the enclosure and may reach dangerously high temperatures. Any heat devices should be controlled by a rheostat or other terrarium thermostat for both home and spider safety.

Functional decorations may include hollow logs, half-log small animal hiding places, cork slabs or tubes. Any of these will help establish secure retreats. Live foliage is good for both natural humidity and gas exchange, but most keepers either keep spartan enclosures or instead use artificial plants for both beauty and cover. Live plants suited for low light situations are best as tarantulas are nocturnal and secretive and only subdued lighting is recommended. For larger planted terrariums requiring direct fluorescent lighting a shaded area should be created with numerous hides that offer darkness.



Pterinopelma sazimai

FOOD & WATER

Brazilian Blue or Iridescent Tarantulas will feed on a variety of arthropods. Crickets are fine for young specimens, but 4 or 5 would be required to make a meal for an adult. Most keepers instead use tropical roaches for adults. Active roaches like *Blaberus discoidalis* are preferred to burrowers like *Blaptica dubia* that will hide, but the latter can be offered from rubber-tipped forceps or dropped directly into the spider's hole. A weekly meal is sufficient. Water is mostly obtained from the food. A water bowl would only be used in dire emergency and is only suggested for adults, but is a good safety net.

SHEDDING

Adult tarantulas molt their skins approximately once a year, but young growing spiders will do so much more often based on food intake. When the abdomen becomes fully expanded the spider will cease feeding and will become dark and have a dull shininess. At this point more frequent misting is advisable to elevate humidity and ensure no troubles during ecdysis (exoskeleton sloughing).

HANDLING

Tarantulas are delicate invertebrates that may be fatally injured by a fall. They are hands-off terrarium pets best left alone. Our recommendation is to not handle tarantulas at all. The well-known spider trapping technique using cup and a piece of cardboard to slide between surface and cup to cover the opening may be used to trap them safely to move them to a new enclosure.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Michael Jacobi, former NW Zoo General Manager, is the author of Animal Planet's *Tarantulas*. This concise primer on tarantula keeping is an excellent resource and contains none of the misinformation found in the most popular tarantula books released by Barron's. Additionally, NW Zoo also owns Tarantulas.com and there is care information to be found there.