



Monster Fish

Care Guide

Tank Busters

Among the hundreds of fish species for sale in aquarium shops, a few grow to be too large for conventional home aquariums. These fish are not good choices for the average home aquarist, especially beginners. However, for those who understand their needs and have the resources and commitment to keep them, they can be fascinating pets. While they may seem adorable at 2" to 3" in the store's tanks, careful thought and planning should be given before buying them. If Monster Fish are your thing, consider the space and structural support you will need for an enormous aquarium, along with the cost of equipment, food and ongoing maintenance. Also, these fish can live for decades, so plan accordingly. Most stores and public aquariums will not take them in when they get too big for your tank, nor should they be expected to. Life events can be unexpected; the eventual size and lifespan of these fish are not.

Water Requirements

Monster Fish produce large amounts of waste, making robust filtration a must. High capacity canister filters, sump-style trickle filters and outdoor pond filters are all good choices. Most Monster Fish owners use multiple filters on their aquariums. Perform a 20% to 30% water change and vacuum a section of the bottom every week.

Housing

Simply put, big fish need big aquariums. A 210-gallon aquarium is the bare minimum for a few Monster Fish species, but most need several if not many times that as adults, requiring a custom built aquarium or an indoor pond. Depending on the species you keep, you will need to provide plenty of swimming area, large decorations that cannot be easily moved or knocked over and hiding places for catfish and nocturnal species like knife fish. Artificial plants should have weighted bases and heaters should be located outside the aquarium or made of titanium or stainless steel if placed inside the aquarium. Keep a secure cover on the tank to prevent fish from jumping out.

Behavior/Compatibility

Most Monster Fish tolerate each other fairly well provided they are similar in size. They usually will not go after anything they cannot fit in their mouth. Large cichlids such as Oscars and Peacock Bass can be territorial, but they are usually well-behaved if they have adequate space and structure to define their territories. Large fish often develop personalities, not unlike traditional pets, and are known to interact with their "humans." It is not unusual for pet Monster Fish to have names.

Feeding

Provide a varied diet that includes pellet and freeze-dried foods, mealworms, earthworms, crickets, and raw fish or seafood. Avoid using live feeder fish, as they can carry diseases, or land animal protein, such as beef heart. Aqueon[®] Jumbo Cichlid Pellets and Monster Fish Medley are convenient, nutritionally balanced foods for large fish. Make sure to remove any uneaten food promptly to prevent water quality problems.

Longevity/Ethical Concerns

The popular myth that fish grow to the size of their environment is just that – a myth. Large fish species often do not achieve their full size in smaller aquariums, not because of limited space, but because of poor water quality and the accumulation of pollutants that stunt their growth. These stunted fish often suffer from deformities and other health problems due to poor living conditions. All fish should be thoroughly researched before purchase. This applies especially to Monster Fish because of their special needs and limited options for rehoming them. Aside from becoming huge, Monster Fish tend to live a long time. Before purchasing any large species, know its expected lifespan and make sure you will be able to care for it for its entire life. Remember, returning it to the store or a public aquarium is usually not an option.


Breeding Level – Difficult

Apart from large cichlids, breeding of most Monster Fish is outside the scope of most home aquarists.

(continued on back)

Monster Fish

Care Guide (continued)

	Fish Type	Adult Size	Lifespan	Aquarium Size
Oscar (<i>Astronotus ocellatus</i>)		Up to 18"	10 to 15 years	180G
Common Plecostomus (<i>Hypostomus plecostomus</i>)		Up to 24"	20+ years	200G
Giant Gourami (<i>Osphronemus gorami</i>)		Up to 28"	15 to 20 years	500G
Peacock Bass (<i>Cichla ocellaris</i>)		Up to 30"	10 to 15 years	500G
Silver Arowana (<i>Osteoglossum bicirrhosum</i>)		Up to 36"	15 to 20 years	500G
Clown Knife (<i>Chitala ornata</i>)		Up to 40"	20+ years	750G
Pacu (<i>Colossoma macropomum</i>)		Up to 40"	40+ years	750G
Tiger Shovelnose Catfish (<i>Pseudoplatystoma tigrinum</i>)		42"+	20+ years	1,000G
Red Tail Catfish (<i>Phractocephalus hemioliopterus</i>)		Up to 53"	25+ years	2,500G
Iridescent Shark (<i>Pangasionodon hypophthalmus</i>)		Up to 53"	20+ years	3,000G