



Giant Green Iguana

Iguana iguana

Wild green iguanas are found naturally in southern Mexico, Central America, and most of South America. A few are found on the Lesser Antilles islands, along with *I. delicatissima*. Green iguanas are arboreal, meaning they live in the trees. They spend the majority of the day high in the forest canopy, and venture to the ground only to move from tree to tree, to mate, and to lay eggs. They are also good swimmers and jumpers. Green iguanas are also diurnal (active during the day and sleeping at night).



Adult Male Green Iguana, *Iguana iguana*

Basic Care:

Habitat: Provide a cage large enough for the iguana to grow in! Cage sizes for hatchlings should be no smaller than the equivalent of a 55 gallon aquarium, with cages for adults being a minimum of 6ftX6ftX3ft. Avoid particulate substrates such as wood chips and sand; such substrates are well-known for causing impactions in iguanas, resulting in expensive surgery or death. Substrates of choice include newspaper, butcher paper, linoleum, and reptile carpet. An iguana cage should be outfitted with various ways for the animal to climb (branches, silk or plastic plants, ramps, shelves), and humidity is of utmost importance. Humidity should be maintained at or near 80%, either through frequent misting or with a humidifier.

Iguanas need both UVA and UVB spectrum lighting to survive. Without UVB, iguanas (and many other reptiles) cannot produce vitamin D3, which is used to properly metabolize calcium. Lack of D3 can lead to a crippling disorder known as Metabolic Bone Disease. Proper amounts of UVB can only be obtained through natural sunlight (unfiltered), and a few select reptile specialty bulbs.

Heating is another important element of an iguana habitat. Iguanas should be provided with a basking spot of 90-95 degrees, with ambient temps of 75-80. Nighttime temperatures can drop into the low 70's. These temperatures are generally achieved through the use of basking lights, ceramic heat emitters, radiant heat panels, or any combination of the above.

Diet: Green Iguanas are strict vegetarians! A proper diet consists mainly (~80%) of dark leafy greens such as collard, dandelion, turnip, mustard, endive, escarole, and cilantro, with (~20%) vegetables such as squashes, green beans, snap peas, parsnips, carrots, and sweet potato. Fruits should be fed sparingly (mainly offered as treats, or to hydrate), and can include figs, berries, mango, papaya, melon, etc. This diet provides the proper calcium to phosphorus ratio (2:1) the iguanas require. Occasional treats can also be made of whole wheat bread, cooked pasta, and rice. Animal protein (insects, mice, cheese, egg, cat/dog food) is to be strictly avoided! Any animal protein in the diet, although causing quick growth, will result in kidney failure and a greatly reduced lifespan.