

17 Best Freshwater Aquarium Fish.

Over 12.5 million households keep freshwater fish in the US. Freshwater fish account for the largest proportion of pets owned across America, so it's no surprise that these fish are the top choice of pet for many people. Most of the species that we'll look at here are easy to care for, will bring beauty and color to your homes, and are very relaxing to watch. Keeping freshwater fish also has many health benefits, such as reducing stress and lowering your blood pressure and heart rate.

With all that said, most people who start off in the fishkeeping hobby get hooked very quickly, mainly because fish are so beautiful to watch and have many characteristics and personalities all of their own. In this article, we're going to take a look at the most popular species available in the freshwater aquarium industry today.

Neon tetra. Neon tetras are a small, easy-to-care-for species that come in bright colors and have an iridescent blue horizontal strip across their bodies. These fish require soft, acidic water with tropical temperatures, and will eat most foods. Due to their extreme popularity, over 1.5 million neon tetras are imported to the US each month!

Guppies. Guppies are colorful and lively fish that are able to adapt to a variety of water conditions, which is one of the reasons they are so popular. They are also very easy to care for. You should keep guppies in sets of threes, and a good guide for the tank size is 1 gallon of water per guppy.

Oscar. Oscar fish are thought to be one of the most intelligent aquarium fish available and are one of the few species that can be trained to do tricks. Oscars, however, are not community fish. They should be kept in species-only tanks, and they can grow very large, very quickly.

Mollies. Molly fish are small, peaceful fish that grow to around 3-4 inches and adapt well to a variety of water conditions. Mollies are omnivorous and will require a diet of both plant and animal food. Interestingly, they are livebearers, meaning they give birth to their young live, rather than lay eggs.

Platies. Platy fish come in almost every color imaginable and are very easy to care for – just two of the reasons why they are so popular. They're very peaceful and get along well with guppies and mollies. Although small, platies are very active and love being in groups. A 10-gallon tank is large enough for 5 fish.

Cherry barb. Cherry barbs get their name from the color the male turns when it is spawning. Usually, they are silver/black with a golden lateral line. They are peaceful fish that grow to around 2 inches in length, and they require a minimum tank size of 25 gallons.

Pearl gourami. The pearl gourami is a relatively large, peaceful fish and is one of the easiest to keep. The minimum tank size for this species is 30 gallons, which should contain plenty of hiding places, dark substrate, and low lighting.

Swordtails. Swordtails are similar in shape to platies and guppy fish, but with slightly bulkier bodies and a sword-shaped extension of their fins. There are many different color variations available and they are quite hardy, which makes them a perfect species for the beginner aquarist.

Discus. Discus fish are beautiful and graceful fish that can grow to be quite large and therefore require a larger tank. These fish need a minimum tank size of 25 gallons. Discus fish are not recommended for beginners, and instead should only be kept by experienced aquarists.

Bettas. Betta fish are another extremely popular freshwater aquarium fish because they are vibrantly colored and easy to care for. Male bettas are notoriously aggressive towards other males. Therefore, only one male betta should be kept in each aquarium. They can be kept with other peaceful fish.

Rainbowfish. Rainbowfish are peaceful, schooling fish that can grow up to 6 inches long. Rainbowfish are one of the least common fish on this list, which may be because their colors only begin to show as they enter adulthood.

Corydoras catfish. Also known as cory cats, corydoras catfish are a staple in most freshwater tanks. They're easy to care for, peaceful, yet active bottom dwellers. Cory catfish are very social, and while you can keep them individually, they thrive if kept in a group of two or more. They get along well with most community tank fish as long as these tank mates are not aggressive.

Goldfish. When most people think of goldfish, they think of small fishbowls with a fish that was won at the fair. This is not the correct way to house goldfish. Few people know that goldfish can actually grow up to 14 inches long in the wild.

Angelfish. Angelfish are members of the Cichlidae family, which includes several other fish species that are popular with aquarium keepers, such as discus fish, oscars, and parrotfish. Angelfish can grow up to 6 inches in length and 8 inches tall, and come in a variety of colors and patterns.

Summary. Freshwater fish come in a huge variety of shapes, colors, and sizes. The most popular fish are usually bright, colorful, and easy to care for. If you're new to fishkeeping, we recommend starting slowly and adding just a few fish at a time. Slowly adding fish to your tank over time will give you chance to get to know and understand how to care for each species of fish before you add another. Make sure you always research the species you want to buy to ensure you can give them the time and care that they require.