

Livebearers

Including Guppies, Mollies, Platys and Swordtails



Left: Male Guppies

Below: Stunning Lyretail Mollies



Left: Colourful Platys

Below: Male Swordtail



Scientific Names

Popular Livebearers kept in the hobby include Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*), Mollies (*Poecilia latipinna*, *P. velifera*), Platys (*Xiphophorus maculatus*, *X. variatus*) and Swordtails (*Xiphophorus helleri*). These species belong to the Live bearing Tooth carp Family or Poeciliidae.

Natural Range

Guppies originate from South America and the West Indies. Mollies are native from Mexico to Venezuela. Platys and Swordtails are native from Mexico to Guatemala.

Maximum Size and Longevity

Depending on the species sizes can range from 3 – 13cm.

Water Quality

Livebearers generally require harder water with pH over neutral:

Temperature: 22°C - 27°C

pH: 6.5 – 7.8

General Hardness: 100 – 300 ppm

Feeding

Almost all of these livebearers are top feeders and will readily take most artificial and frozen foods. However, they should be given a diet with high vegetable content and a dry food like TETRA's Spirulina Tropical Flakes should be used occasionally. AI Naturals Range Frozen Tropical Mix is also highly suited to these varieties.

The fry are about 7 to 10mm in length when born and are probably the most easily raised species as they will feed off finely ground dry foods and do not require smaller live foods like most other species when beginning to feed.

Compatibility

They are compatible with most community species in a densely planted community tank. Mollies prefer slightly

alkaline water and will do best with a little sea salt added to the aquarium. Fully grown Swordtails may get a little aggressive with small peaceful species such as Neon Tetra's, but in a well planted tank should pose no problems.

Colour and Varieties

While there are many beautiful wild forms of livebearers, these species have been selectively bred throughout the world to produce a huge variety of colours, body shape and fin arrangement.

Sexing

Livebearers have the common trait that they give birth to free swimming young (ovoviparous), instead of egg laying like most other fishes. To achieve this, male livebearers have a modified anal fin called a gonopodium that is used to facilitate internal fertilization of the female. Once fertilised, the eggs mature inside the oviduct of the mother. The eggs then hatch internally and give 'birth' to the resultant offspring soon after.

General Information

Guppies are probably the most popular livebearer among both aquarium owners and advanced breeders. The once humble, dull-coloured guppy has become a sought after fish for hobbyists who are interested in genetic processes, resulting in many varieties of spectacular colourations and finnage. Their ease of breeding means that it is the first species many hobbyists begin to breed. However, because of intense breeding, fancier guppies can be harder to maintain.

Platys and Swordtails are of the same genus and are very similar in some aspects; in fact interbreeding between the 2 species is possible. The main difference is that male Swordtails have a 'sword' on their caudal tails. These two groups of fishes are also popular, very colourful and active. These fish are robust and tolerant of a wide range of aquarium conditions and are recommended for beginners. Mollies also make a great addition to the community aquarium and come in a range of bright colours and varieties.