

Aquascaping

10 tips for making the most of your tank



Why put plants in my tank?

Planted freshwater aquariums are a beautiful addition to any room, and will draw admiring comments from visitors.

But did you know that many freshwater fish will actually feel happier, and look better, in a planted aquarium? It's true! Shy fish such as Tetras will feel more comfortable when they have a planted area to hide in, especially if there are larger, more aggressive fish in a tank with them. Some male Tetras, such as the Black Phantom Tetra, compete with each other for female attention by 'shining' their colours—but only in a planted tank. Even some barbs, such as the male Cherry Barb, will colour more brightly when surrounded by plants.

In addition, plants are the recycling system of the aquarium. They use the waste products from the fish as fertiliser, which powers their growth. As they grow, they generate oxygen, which the fish then breathe. A perfect combination.

So when you choose to decorate your tank with plants, you will not only add interest and colour to your aquarium. You will ensure that your fish are happy, healthy, and vibrant.

We have put together some handy tips for setting out a planted aquarium. You might want to use these tips when getting started.

1. The Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds, as practised in photography and the visual arts, is often used when planning and aquascaping a new tank.

To use this rule, think of your tank as an image or painting. Divide your image (tank) into three sections—commonly the foreground, midground and background, then use these intersecting points to frame and focus what you want the viewer to see. In the case of aquariums, the use of this rule brings out the natural beauty of a living environment, as you re-create a river, stream or lake on your blank canvas.

2. Delineate areas to avoid clutter

When selecting and growing foreground, mid ground and background plants, it's important to keep a clear distinguished line between them. If the lines are blurred, it can cause the tank to look too busy and not natural.

3. Nature is not symmetrical

Avoid symmetry. Symmetry will make the tank look too artificial, and not like an image found in nature.

4. Regular maintenance is a must

Aquatic plants need care in the same way that your garden does. Feeding, trimming and replanting are all part of making your aquatic garden grow—and this can be a relaxing and pleasurable past-time too.

5. Less is more

When it comes to adding fish, less is always more. The environment you are trying to create is copied from nature and best suited to small schools of fish which don't detract from the form of the aquascape.

6. Use contrasting colour

As most freshwater aquatic plants are green, contrasting colours will help break up the tank and give it definition. Be careful not to use more than 2 additional colours though, as this will make the tank look cluttered.

7. Size is everything

Size is everything when aquascaping. The aim is to make the tank look as large as possible, and this is best achieved by using every element in the tank to your advantage. The key is to create the appearance that an object is larger than it is.

Keep this in mind when selecting rocks or driftwood. For example, avoid placing a large piece of wood in a small tank as this will only emphasise the lack of space. Instead, try adding a smaller piece with more interesting features such as twisting branches. This will give the tank a more natural look. You can then take the opportunity to plant around the base of the wood. This increases its presence in the tank and adds to its scale.

8. Research before planting

It is important to understand how large, and how quickly, the plants grow before you plant them. This will give you more control over the finished product. All plants in the Aquarium Industries Naturals Range are clearly labelled with their ultimate height, which makes it easy for you to work out if they are the right size for your tank, and whether they are suited to the fore, mid, or background of your tank. Each plant has a dedicated Care Sheet too, which will tell you more about the speed at which it will grow.

Be sure to research what products, substrate and fertilisers you'll need before starting too. Some plants feed through their roots, and require a substrate fertiliser. Others feed through their leaves. A liquid plant food is ideal for these plants. Our Care Sheets contain more information to help you.

9. Plant for the future

Planting your tank is fun, but you need to remember that planting may not give you the look you want right away. Be patient with your plants as they grow, and make adjustments as needed.

10. Choose a quality plant

It's important to choose quality products for your tank, and plants are no exception. Aquarium Industries Naturals Range Tissue Culture Plants are guaranteed to be totally free from nasty surprises such as snails, diseases and algae. And because we choose only true aquatic plants for our range, you can be sure that they will have a long and healthy life in your tank.

Your design is only limited by your imagination. Why not start today!



For more Care Sheets like this, visit our website: aquariumindustries.com.au