

## Guppies: Basic Set-up to Show Bench

© Derek Jordan

Taken from transcript of presentation made at the 2006 B.L.A. Convention & International Guppy Show.

### Why keep Guppies?

We'll have a look at the following pictures and I hope you will then see why it is worth making the effort.



Vienna Emerald Bottom Sword



Blue Grass



Coffer or Spade Tail



Half-Black Red



Red Double Sword



Spear Tail



Super White



Vienna Green Emerald Double Sword

So how do you get started? Well the first step is a tank, but what size?

My personal preferences are as follows:

Breeding tanks of 1 pair or a trio about 5.5Gal. 10" (250mm) x 12" (300mm) x 10" (250mm)

Growing on tanks 10 gal. 18" (450mm) x 12" (300mm) x 10" (250mm)

**Position tanks end on not lengthways**

10 x 10 x 18

**End on tanks mean you fit more tanks in your fish house.**

18 x 10 x 10

These are photos of my own fish house a purpose built shed of 8'(2.4m) x 6' (1.8m) with a polycarbonate slopping roof 6' 8" (2m) at the highest side slopping down to 6' 5" (1.92m) contains 42 tanks



### **Keep It Simple**

I always keep my tanks simple bare bases and a single plastic plant with simple air driven box filters, this way they are easy to keep clean and stay disease free.

I use plastic plants as they can easily be sterilised. As you will see also from the picture I use two filters in tandem as this allows me to alternate the cleaning of each filter on a two weekly basis, all I do is take out the filter wool and squeeze and rinse it under some clean tank water until the water running out when it is squeezed is clean.



### **Basic Air Driven Filtration System**

The air flow through the filter should make the tank surface look like it is boiling, this gives a good current to the tank and ensures that the fish are strong, however if the fish are getting too much current and struggling with it reduce the airflow until they look like they have to swim against the current but do not have to fight against it, in other words they do not look like they are in a washing machine and been buffeted around the tank by the flow.

**Ideal Water Chemistry** · PH 7.2 · General Hardness (GH) 8-12

**Temperature** · Fry (up to 4 months) 78f · Juveniles (4 - 8 months) 76f · Adults 74f

The above statistics are for the ideal conditions however, as long as the water is not too acidic and you maintain good fish keeping husbandry your Guppies will quickly adapt, to your specific conditions.



**Lighting: With** Guppies it is not the intensity of the lighting that is important but the duration. The optimum time is 12 hours per day with daylight been the best and cheapest form, unfortunately we do not get 12 hours of daylight per day throughout the year so a 30 - 40 watt bulb will do just as good, my own lighting is 2 x 15watt strip lights secured to the top of the roof.

### **Maintenance**

- Min 25% water change per week
- Run two air driven filters
- Clean the inside front glass (So you can see what is going on)

The above is a very simple maintenance program; you may need to carry out more regular or larger water changes if you are feeding your fish heavily or if you are trying to grow some fry on when 50% water changes improve the fish's growth.

### **Stocking Levels**

- One inch of mature fish per gallon

If you intend to exceed the above levels all you need to do is increase your water changes but be warned that if you exceed the above stocking levels and fail to keep the water clean your fish will not reach their full potential.

## Feeding

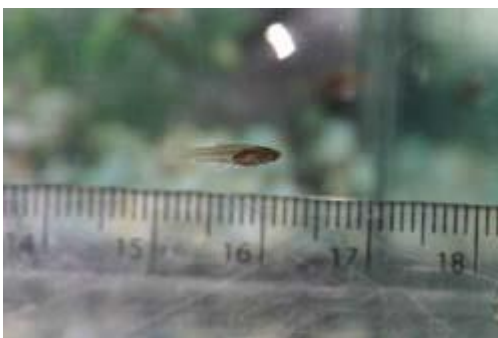
- Rule of thumb - little and often
- Very simple use quality flake 3 times per day
- Frozen food and live food also very beneficial

Many Guppy enthusiasts have different approaches to feeding their fish some only use quality dried food (of which some make themselves using a dehydrator) others use only live foods. My personal choice is a mixture of both approaches, although I must admit I do not make my own dry foods, for me it seems an awful lot of work when you can buy a finished product straight of the shelf.

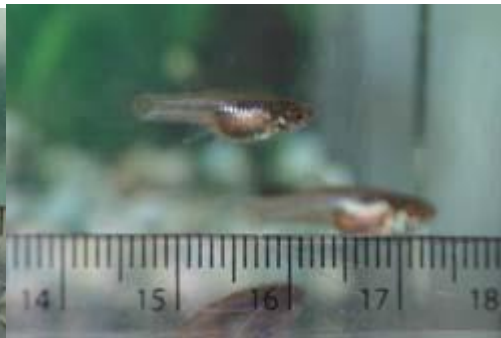
I feed all my fish the same newly hatched brine shrimp which I bio-encapsulate (Gut Load) to improve the nutritional value, Bio-encapsulated brine shrimp also lasts longer as they have something to eat. The fish are fed Brine shrimp 2 x per day and powdered flake food 2 x per Day.

The flake food is fed usually 20 min before the Brine shrimp; I do this to slow the passage of the brine shrimp through the fishes gut.

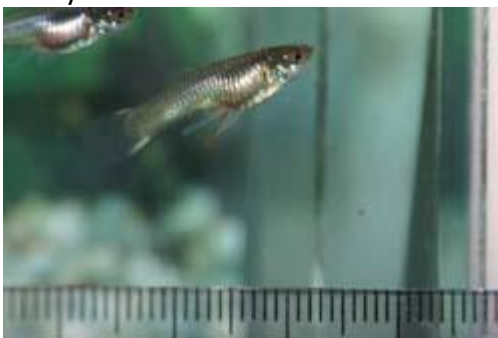
Guppies grow at a fantastic rate in the first 6 weeks of their lives if fed correctly, if you want to grow your fish to their maximum potential this first 6 weeks is very important as shown below.



3 days old - 9mm



4 weeks old - 18mm



6 weeks old - 26mm



10 weeks old



14 weeks old

20 weeks old

### **A Balanced Diet Is Very Important**

- Guppies are Omnivores so eat a varied diet, always try and include some form of vegetable matter in their diet (e.g. Vegetable flake)
- Too much Protein in their diet turns to fat once the initial growing period slows, this also damages the liver of the fish

The importance of a balanced diet can clearly be seen from the above pictures the red guppy has large deposits of fat around the abdomen not only is this not desirable on the show bench it is also very detrimental to the fishes health, the life span of guppies fed on a high protein high fat diet may be halved, this also effects the ability of the fish to reproduce so will affect the number of fry you will get.

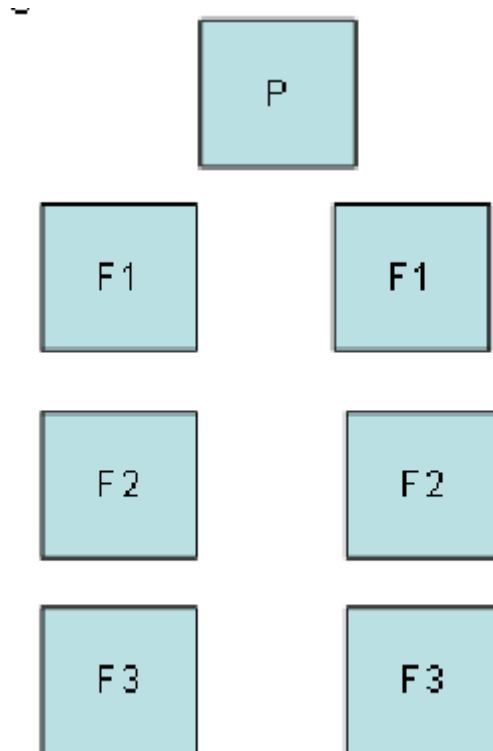
### **Male Guppy Development**

- The first 4 months is all about size
- Months 4-6 on average it is the tail that becomes the fastest growing part of the Guppy
- The next 3 months it is the turn of the dorsal to grow the fastest
- As you can see it may be 9 months depending on your strain before you know which your best males are going to be.

### **Female Guppy Development**

- Initially the males outgrow the females, but by the 4<sup>th</sup> week the females catch up and overtake the male - as the females are going to be twice the size of the males this is inevitable
- By the age of 7-8 months the female has achieved 90% of her size; although she like the male will continue to grow throughout the whole of their lives all be it at a much reduced rate
- Female Guppies can reproduce from on average 2 ½ months of age.

## Breeding Methods



**Line Breeding: This** is the simplest method of maintaining your guppy strain.

The first litter that your stock fish have are split in to two different lines and maintained on a sibling to sibling cross basis until the third generation (F3) when you then cross one line to the other and start the process all over again.



**Back Crossing:** This is where you would breed say the daughter back to the father or son back to the mother. This would normally be done to stabilize the strain if you were finding the less than 80% of the fry did not resemble the parent fish, this back cross using the male of female that most closely resembled the parent fish fixes the problem that the parent fish were genetically stable and not two different strains.

## Out Crossing:

This is where you have two unrelated lines - it is the opposite too line breeding.

Why Out Cross? **Answer** To add a gene i.e. a red dorsal or to fix a problem i.e. poor tail shape

## Record Keeping

### Basic Headings

1. ID Number
2. Male or Female
3. Type of Strain
4. Cross Type
5. Parentage
6. Date Born
7. Date of Litters Produced
8. Breeders Produced
9. Date of Set Up



Use masking tape to label tanks

The label shows details of the Breeder number; date breeders set up: Strain type and where they originated: this could be from another breeder set i.e. #24 if they were the parent fish.



When it comes to collecting fry you can use a number of different methods, but my own preferred method is to fill the tank with fine leaved plastic plants, this way they can be easily removed and sterilised for the next time I need them.

If your aim is to compete on the show circuit you must know what is expected of the fish that you are keeping shown below is what the basic shape of the fish should look like but there are many other aspects that also need to be correct if you are going to be placed in the top three.

If you are interested in the show circuit and what better place to have your efforts recognised, then refer to the I.K.G.H standards.



Whilst showing Guppies is hard work the satisfaction of winning a class with a fish that you have bred and nurtured to maturity is immense.

This article is copyright© and may not be reproduced without the permission of the author.  
To submit your questions and comments on the article direct to the author email:  
[derek.jordan@sjpp.co.uk](mailto:derek.jordan@sjpp.co.uk)