

Terrarium Instructions and Mantis Care

Information

- Your Chinese mantis is a young nymph that has shed its skin once or twice. Male mantises have eight abdominal segments, and females have six.

How to Assemble and Maintain a Terrarium

- Select an extra-large terrarium container, such as a Kritter Keeper. The terrarium should have clear-plastic walls and a lid (preferably self-locking) with ventilation holes.
- Place screening material between the lid and base of the terrarium to prevent small insects from escaping.
- The terrarium should contain the following materials:
 - 1–2 different types of plants
 - 1–2 worms
 - 1 Chinese praying mantis
 - 1 stick
 - 1 small, shallow water dish with small sponge
 - Soil
 - Rock
 - 1 spray bottle
- The terrarium should be kept at room temperature.
- Mist the inside of the terrarium every two or three days so the praying mantis has water to drink. Keep in mind that too much humidity (misting) and/or not enough ventilation can promote the growth of mold in the terrarium.
- Lightly water the soil for the plants every few days, but be careful not to overwater.
- Don't fill the water dish too full. The mantis can fall into the water if it's too deep.
- If the classroom is hot over the weekend, the worm(s) may take refuge in the water dish, which will cause them to die. To prevent this from happening, you may want to lightly mist the terrarium and moisten the soil before you leave on Friday. This is a little tricky because overwatering can cause mold and spores to grow.
- The plants inside the terrarium need some sunlight each day; however, direct sunlight will overheat the praying mantis and ladybugs. Instead, expose the terrarium to *indirect* sunlight each day for a short period of time to keep the plants alive.

Food Requirements and Feeding Schedule

- Mantises require live foods and won't eat dead insects. Your mantis can eat a variety of insects, such as fruit flies, crickets, and ladybugs, as well as honey. (See also <http://www.prayingmantisshop.com/mantis-supplies.html>.)
- Your mantis has a specific feeding schedule and food requirements based on its stage of growth. (Your mantis may be a 2nd or 3rd instar.)
 - **1st instar:** fruit flies, microcrickets, gnats, aphids, and other minibugs; feed 1–3 flies daily or every other day
 - **2nd instar:** fruit flies, microcrickets, gnats, aphids, and other minibugs; feed 1–3 flies daily or every other day

- **3rd instar:** fruit flies, houseflies, small crickets, and/or small roaches; feed every 1–3 days
- **4th instar:** houseflies, small crickets, and/or small roaches; feed every 1–3 days
- **5th instar:** same feeder insects as 4th instar, but slightly larger; feed every 1–3 days
- **6th instar:** same feeder insects as 4th instar, but larger; feed every 1–3 days with larger pieces of food
- **7th instar:** same feeder insects as 4th instar, but larger; feed every 1–3 days
- **8th instar:** adult crickets, bluebottle flies, and/or roaches (variety is good); feed every 1–3 days.

Feeding Tips

- **Fruit flies (flightless):** Before feeding the mantis, just put the container with fruit flies in the fridge for about 2–5 minutes, or until they slow down. When the flies cool down to the point where they aren't able to move, drop them in the terrarium with your mantis. They should come back to life in a few minutes as they warm up. If they don't come back to life after 5 or 10 minutes, this means you left them in the fridge too long.
- **Ladybugs:** Similar to the fruit flies, put the ladybug container in the fridge for 2–5 minutes, or until the ladybugs slow down. Then grab one or two ladybugs and drop them in the terrarium.
- **Crickets:** Never feed the mantis more than two proportionately sized crickets at a time. One cricket every other day should be fine.
- **Honey sticks:** Cut off the end of the plastic tube and squeeze the opposite end a bit. *Lightly* touch the mouth of the mantis with the open end of the honey stick.