

## Water

It does not have to be a costly venture to properly setup your new discus fish aquarium and provide proper discus care. It will require an investment of time to properly maintain your discus aquarium. You should investigate the parameters of your local tap water. If the tap water in your area is very hard with a high ph, you may want to use softened water to blend with your tap water in order to achieve desirable water for the discus. The softer water will be easier to adjust the ph to the desired range for the discus fish. An excellent method of softening tap water for use in the discus aquarium is the use of a reverse osmosis filter. **In many areas local tap water supplies are fine for keeping discus.** However, most cities add chloramines to the water to disinfect it. This is a blend of ammonia and chlorine. Both are toxic to discus. They can be removed from the tap water by filtration or use of a dechlorinating water conditioner.

In choosing a stocking density, allow a **minimum of 20-30 liter per discus**. The **ideal water parameters** for proper care of the discus aquarium is medium hardness GH 15, slightly acidic ph 7 values with the temperature between 28-30°C.

**Clean water should have zero ammonia and nitrite levels.** Elevated nitrate levels indicate a need for water changes. In some areas, nitrate is present in the tap water. Overfeeding can increase nitrate levels. High nitrate levels inhibit growth and color development in discus. **Water changes must be done on a regular basis** to ensure a healthy discus aquarium.

## Filtration

The most important type of filter category in any aquarium, especially the discus fish aquarium is: **Termed biological filtration.** Most types of filters can be properly configured to provide good biological filtration for the discus aquarium. The key is to set it up the discus fish filtration for optimum performance. A very porous biological filter media material should be used in discus fish filtration. This biological filter media allows lots of good nitrifying bacteria to colonize it and remove toxins and impurities. It takes several weeks for these bacteria to multiply and establish a colony in the biological media. There are products you can buy to speed up this process of cycling the filter. **Sponge filters** are great for the discus fish aquarium filtration. **Care must be taken with sponge filters not to disturb the nitrifying bacteria when cleaning.** Aquarium water must be used and the sponge filters cannot be cleaned too often or the nitrifying bacteria will be disrupted. A combination of sponge filters and bio wheel filters with added biological filter media are an excellent choice for discus fish aquarium filtration.

**LIGHTING THE DISCUS AQUARIUM** Discus fish have large eyes designed to see in dark murky water. As a result, avoid high intensity lighting as the discus fish will not like it. If you are setting up a planted discus fish aquarium, a full spectrum light bulb should be sufficient.

## Heating the Discus Aquarium

Discus fish are a warm water species of tropical fish and need the correct water temperature in the aquarium. The ideal temperature for the discus fish aquarium is 28-30 degrees. It is safer to use two smaller heaters as opposed to one large one. A heater with external temperature control is convenient. However, care must be used. When the control fails, these heaters can literally cook the fish. If using a heater with an external control, touch the control regularly to determine if it is getting hot. **Attach the discus fish aquarium heater horizontally along the back wall, near the bottom.**

**Regular aquarium maintenance is vital to the health and well being of the discus fish.** This includes regularly water tests, cleaning the inside and outside walls of the aquarium. When cleaning a power filter, place the bio media in a container of aquarium water. This keeps the beneficial bacteria alive and cleans it. The impeller can be removed from power filters and cleaned. Sponge filters should not be cleaned too often. Avoid using tap water to clean any biological media including sponges. The chlorine will kill the bacteria and the raw tap water will shock the bacteria. **Over cleaning can disrupt the nitrifying bacteria in the biological media of the discus aquarium filter, resulting in ammonia and nitrite toxicity problems.**