

Star Tortoises

Geochelone elegans

Star tortoises are one of the more beautiful species available. Their pattern actually gives way to their name, creating intricate stars in black and off which across their shell. Stars are a small species, females only growing to 7-inches, males staying even smaller. They are a woodland tortoise, preferring moderate weather and climate. Stars do not hibernate.

Housing

Hatchlings, 2"- 4" in length, can be kept easily in **2'Wx12"Lx12"H**. Adults thrive in **5'Wx3'Lx2'H** enclosures or larger. It is always suggested that with more than one animal, you must think bigger than five-foot.

Most substrates that one can find in their backyard works very well on these tortoises. Mixing multiple types incorporates all of the positive aspects into one. Leopard tortoises are not burrowers, and more so nest so the substrate just needs to insulate the bottom of their enclosure.

Soil, leaf litter, grass cuttings, mulch, aspen shavings.

They need a water dish, with water changes daily. When deciding what dish to use, make sure it's something your tortoise can easily crawl into. For hatchlings, you have very flat, small-lipped containers to combat the disaster of them falling in and overturning in the water dish. The water level should reach half way up their shell so they don't drown when inside. Tortoises do like hides. They need an area where they can escape the light if they choose to, whether it is half a pot for a plant for a baby, all the way to a doghouse for an adult.

No artificial plants or fake grass should be easily accessible. They will ingest those plastics and become sick.

The current viewpoint towards Star Tortoises and humidity has changed in the last couple of years. This is due to the high volume of individuals with *debilitating* pyramiding in the pet trade. For a healthy carapace, humid hides and fog machines are instrumental. We also recommend that you soak your baby and young tortoises (until about 8-inches) in lukewarm water at least once a week, or every other day at most.

Temperatures

Daytime

105°F (basking surface temperature) and 70°F (cool side)

Nighttime

70°F is a good *minimum* nighttime temperature. This can be easily accomplished with an UNDER the tank heat pad under the area they go to sleep in.

Star tortoises *Do Not* brumate. Heat must be provided year-round

Infrared Temperature Guns are very beneficial in keeping a healthy enclosure; they read the momentary surface and air temperatures. I highly recommend you invest in one.

UVB

ALL Tortoises need UVB florescent bulbs if they are not receiving natural (unfiltered) sunlight. UVB bulbs include;

Repti-sun 10.0, Power-suns 100 watts, Arcadia D3 + 10% T5 HO

Food

Their base diet is green vegetables.

Endive, escarole, dandelion greens, shredded cactus pads, baby kale, red leaf, green leaf, arugula and chicory leaf, oak leaf, mizuna, mustard leaf, frisee, berry leaves, grape leaves, radish greens

Root veggies, shredded, will add variety into their diet. Usually, I feel these out two to three times a week.

Yellow squash, banana squash, zucchini, yams or sun burst squash

There is a very large variety of flowers that are non-toxic. You must be aware of the source of your flowers. Food-grade flowers are hard to find. They must be non-fertilized and fully organic. Runoff from contaminated water can leach pesticides into the flowers.

Dandelion Flowers, Hibiscus, Roses, Dendrobium Sp. Of Orchid, Pansies, Carnations

Fruit should be fed moderately. Fruit is a treat. This between 10% of their diet. Fruit with a higher concentration of sugar and vitamin C should be fed in fewer quantities because it can cause diarrhea in high doses.

Fruit can have a high percentage of acid. *Do Not* feed oranges, lemons and limes.

Berries, Bell pepper, Tomatoes, Peaches and Nectarines, Watermelon, Mango, Cantaloupe

Do Not feed spinach, parsley, chard, iceberg lettuce or broccoli.

Do Not feed animal based protein (dog or cat food, bugs, meat)

Supplementation

Supplementation needs to be a Calcium (1.5% per serving) + Vitamin D3 (3,000 IU/KG)

Repashy Grassland Grazers, Zoo Med Repti Calcium *with* D3, Mazuri tortoise diet (soaked), Repashy Superveggies

