



Catfish

General Information



Catfish are a large, very diverse group of fish with more than 3,000 species having been already identified. The name Catfish is because many of these species have barbels around their mouth which resemble whiskers on a cat.

Catfish are a useful asset to any aquarium: they are great for helping to keep aquariums clean and free of algae, for eating uneaten food on the bottom of the tank, and also to add interest to the bottom section of the tank.

Most catfish species are suitable for the Beginner, but some rarer catfish are much more demanding and are best by fish hobbyists with experienced or advanced fish keeping skills.

Origin and Habitat

Catfish naturally occur on every continent except the Antarctic but many of the more popular species originate from South America. They inhabit freshwater and marine environments but most species inhabit shallow flowing freshwater.

Water quality

Catfish are generally tolerant of a wide variety of water quality conditions and temperatures, although South American species generally prefer soft acidic water conditions.

Feeding

Catfish are generally classed as detritovores or omnivores, although some species are highly carnivorous. In nature they feed on dead and decaying material on the bottom but may also feed on small insects, crustaceans, fish and plants. In the aquarium, they are easily fed with sinking type foods such as Kirby catfish wafers. Some types such as Plecos also benefit from feeding with partially boiled vegetables like pumpkin and zucchini.

Bristlenose catfish are a great addition to community tanks.

Compatibility and tank mates

Species such as the various Bristlenose and Corydoras are ideal for community tanks. Many of the smaller species such as Corydoras school by nature and are best kept in groups of 5 or more. They look fantastic swimming around an aquarium in a school! Be careful with larger Catfish species (eg Bumblebee Catfish, Pimelodus) – some will eat small fish such as Neon Tetras, particularly at night.

Breeding

Many species are challenging to breed in captivity which means many species are still wild caught. However, Bristlenose Cats and Corydoras species such as the Bronze and Peppered Cory's are easily bred by beginners.