



*Lesley Marshall

Antilles Pinktoe Tarantula (*Caribena versicolor*)

Violet Stars in the Antilles

The Antilles pinktoe is a medium sized, slender bodied arboreal tarantula that is quite attractively colored with metallic blues, purples, reds, oranges, and greens. Antilles Pink toed tarantulas are an arboreal species of tarantula, and are primarily solitary and nocturnal. As with many tarantulas, this species can use its hind limbs to flick its loosely lodged hairs on its abdomen and limbs to serve as an irritant to many predators, and are known as urticating hairs. A relatively new but commonly available and frequently maintained species, the Antilles pinktoe tarantula has recently become a popular and widely available choice among pet owners and enthusiasts.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Subphylum: Chelicerata

Class: Arachnida

Order: Araneae

Infraorder: Mygalomorphae

Family: Theraphosidae

Genus: *Caribena*

Species: *Caribena versicolor**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Males of many tarantula species will often attain life spans of only 5 to 6 years. Females attain considerably longer life spans of 15 to 20 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

The Antilles pinktoe tarantula is a medium sized to large, arboreal species of New World tarantula indigenous to the Caribbean. More specifically, this beautiful, tree dwelling species occurs from Martinique, the Lesser Antilles, to Dominica and Guadeloupe. Within this range, this vibrant species may be found among stands in tropical to sub-tropical forests and woodlands, to savannahs and tropical scrublands, where they occupy areas of dense foliage and vegetation, tree hollows and cavities, and among the branches, trunks, and loose vertical bark of trees and

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other shrubby vegetation.

Conservation Status

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Legal and Regulatory Status (*Subject to Change)

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Antilles pinktoe tarantulas are medium-sized to large tarantulas reaching a total legspan of about 4 ½ to 6 inches on average.

Housing and Enclosure

Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 10 gallons tall in size with a secure top for a single adult spider. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used.

Spiderlings can be housed in an appropriately sized spiderling vial, plastic container or deli cup with adequate holes for ventilation. Acceptable substrate to use can include pesticide free potting soil, coconut fiber, vermiculite, or similar substrates 1 to 3 inches in depth. Decorations and/or other cage furnishings can also be included as well, although height is more important than floor space. This is an arboreal genus that benefits from branches, vertical cork bark, and plants for refuge. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly as well as regular misting for hydration.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Most species of tarantulas have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for your tarantula's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Antilles Pinktoe tarantulas are a species that do best at room temperature between 70 to 85 degrees. Maintain at 75 to 80% humidity but the enclosure must have adequate ventilation. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; In the wild, Antilles pinktoe tarantulas are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally eat smaller vertebrates as well if they can catch and subdue them. In captivity, these tarantulas can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. This will promote optimal exoskeleton growth and development. Any uneaten food items should be cleaned and removed after a day or two. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed even

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invertebrates, as obesity and other health related issues can still become an issue with them. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

The Antilles Pinktoes are typically unaggressive species that can be handled carefully so as to avoid injuring the spider. However, they can be a skittish and fast moving species. Tarantulas are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping a spider can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your tarantula. Antilles Pinktoes may raise their hind legs or "rear up" to display its fangs and front legs when upset or agitated. Although most tarantulas are not medically significant, with most being lesser than or just about equal to a bee sting, medical attention should still be sought from any apparent allergic reaction to a bite, or extreme irritation from urticating hairs from a pet tarantula.

Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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