



Green Iguana *Iguana iguana*

- The Green iguana is a large lizard that ranges from green, olive green, brown, or sometimes reddish in color, sometimes with darker reddish-brown bands along the side, and dark bands on the tail. A large, loose dewlap, distinctive jowels, and single row of dorsal spines also characterize the green iguana.
- Green iguanas are indigenous to Mexico, Central America, and much of South America, but have been introduced in many other places.
- Like some other lizards, green iguanas have a vestigial third eye atop their heads that detect changes in overhead light.
- ***Green iguanas are very popular reptile pets, but please research the size, husbandry, and housing needs beforehand. Given proper care, green iguanas can live for 15-20 years or more.***
- ***Green Iguana care is not simple by any means, and this care sheet should not be considered complete or exhaustive, but rather a starting guide to the essentials and the basics. Please see the additional resources and information for far more detailed aspects of green iguana husbandry.***

Size

Hatchlings begin at approximately 12-18 inches. Most adult green iguanas reach 5 to 7 feet (or 54-84 inches).

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. A hatchling iguana can be started off in a 20-30 gallon long terrarium or similar sized enclosure, but will outgrow these quarters and require accordingly larger housing. ***The minimum enclosure size for an adult green iguana would be at least 1 ½ to 2 times the animal's length by 4 feet by 5 feet.*** Custom designed enclosures are available as well, with acceptable substrates including cypress mulch, non toxic newspaper or paper towel, or indoor/outdoor carpeting folded and taped to prevent unraveling. Green iguanas are arboreal lizards, and require sufficient enclosure height with ample basking, and climbing spaces including sturdy branches, shelves, and other perches. Younger iguanas may require additional retreats such as hideboxes or artificial foliage. A sturdy, easily cleaned and disinfected food, water, and litter dish should all also be provided as well (green iguanas can even become litter trained with patience).

For basking, create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure. Ideal ambient temperatures would be mid 80's degrees F, with a basking temperature of about 120 degrees F. Green iguanas require overhead UVB and UVA incandescent and fluorescent lighting to thrive. Do not allow your iguana to come into contact with any heating element. Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months. ***More detailed housing and enclosure recommendations for green iguanas and other large lizards that are beyond the scope of this care sheet can and should be researched further by any prospective pet owner.***

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, green iguanas are primarily herbivorous, feeding on a variety of plant materials including leafy greens, flowers, fruits, vegetable matter, and occasionally insects or other invertebrates.

Green iguanas have a large variety of dietary requirements that should be met if kept in captivity. Many commercialized iguana diets are available, and can be used.

Chopped, store bought fruits and vegetables are also typically relished by green iguanas, and can include mustard greens, collard and turnip greens, green beans, kale, squash, sweet potatoes, carrots, as well as many other choices. Pesticide, or chemical free dandelions and other select weeds can also be given. Absolutely avoid diets high in protein, as such diets can and do lead to gout, renal disease, and other disorders seen in iguanas. Calcium and vitamin D3 supplements are also recommended as part of a healthy green iguana diet. Iceberg lettuce can be given, but contains very little nutrients. Feeding frequency depends on age and size of the animal, and should be at minimum every other day. ***More detailed diets and feeding recommendations for green iguanas and other large lizards that are beyond the scope of this care sheet can and should be researched further by any prospective pet owner.***

Handling

Green iguanas are animals that require gentle, deliberate, and regular handling in order to become accustomed to being handled. As hatchlings, green iguanas are typically not aggressive, but can be somewhat delicate and skittish initially, and should be handled carefully to prevent injury. Larger and older iguanas can be safely handled using a variety of techniques that adequately support the animal's weight distribution and/or that restrain movements if needed or depending on the disposition of the animal to be handled. A captive born and raised green iguana can become a very docile and personable adult animal to maintain. However, other specimens, such as male iguanas can become aggressive and territorial and require much more careful and experienced handling. ***More detailed handling techniques for green iguanas and other large lizards that are beyond the scope of this care sheet can and should be researched further.***

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

Additional Green Iguana Resources

Green Iguana Society

<http://www.greenigsociety.org/careinfo.htm>

Melissa Kaplan's Green Iguana Care Guide

<http://www.anapsid.org/iguana/>

Pet IguanaCare.org

<http://petiguanacare.org/>