



Map Turtles (*Graptemys* sp.)

- Map turtles are large, semi aquatic pond turtle species indigenous to much of the eastern United States and southern Canada depending on species.
- These large turtles have a grayish, greenish, to olive gray carapace with numerous pale lines resembling a topographical map. There may be a dorsal keel, with serrated rear marginal scutes, and the skin ranges from blackish to olive with numerous white to yellow stripes.
- Common subspecies are the Ouachita/Southern Map Turtle (*Graptemys ouachitensis*), Northern Map Turtle (*Graptemys geographica*), and Mississippi/False Map Turtle (*Graptemys pseudogeographica*).
- Map turtles are very popular pet turtles in the pet industry, but grow to large sizes, require frequent cleaning, and considerable space.
- Map turtles may attain longevity of 30-40 years or more with proper care. Sales of turtles under 4" in length are for bona fide educational purposes only.

Size

Adult map turtles usually reach a carapace (shell) length of 4 ½ -12 inches, which females being larger than males.

Housing

Map turtles are semi aquatic and powerful swimmers. Provide a sturdy, escape proof aquarium or commercially available turtle tub of sufficient size with an elevated dock or basking area/access to dry land using a substrate dam. Provide a minimum of 10 gallons of space per inch of shell, or about 50-120 gallons for most adult map turtles. A powerful water filter rated at least twice that of the amount of water in the enclosure is highly recommended for aquatic turtles, as they are messy and require frequent cleaning and regular water changes. Use a submersible water heater with a guard to maintain water temperatures of 75-85 degrees F. Substrate is optional, and foregoing it makes for easier cleaning and maintenance, but small to medium sized gravel can be used. Additional rocks, logs, live or artificial foliage can also be provided for additional foraging and hiding opportunities.

Additional overhead lighting and heating elements are necessary to maintain optimal health and nutrition of maps. Provide a basking area or platform with UVB and UVA for your map turtle to emerge completely from the water and monitor at around 85-90 degrees F.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, map turtles are omnivorous to carnivorous, feeding on carrion, small fish, snails, crustaceans, mussels/clams, and other aquatic invertebrates.

In captivity, map turtles tend to be more carnivorous than other aquatic turtles, and can be given a variety of prey or food items including commercialized turtle pellets and diets, small feeder fish, leafy greens such as turnup, mustard, and collard greens, superworms, earthworms, mealworms, feeder roaches or crickets, freeze dried shrimp, and even small frozen/thawed pinkie mice (but avoid too much protein). A varied diet is important, and providing some additional vitamin D3 and calcium supplementation during 2-3 times weekly feeding also is beneficial.

Handling

Map turtles are generally a more wary and skittish genus of turtles, but captive born and raised maps can become very tame and personable pets, often even approaching

their keepers for food. Handling these turtles from the rear of the carapace reduces the chances of being nipped or scratched when they are threatened, however.

****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****