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**Are You In Need Of Saltwater Aquarium Decorations? - Brightening Up Your Marine Tank!**

**By Sam Weston**

Now for the fun part - saltwater aquarium decorations are one aspect of marine fish keeping where you can really allow your creativity to reign free. A variety of decorations are available – from backgrounds, ceramic, resin or plastic ornaments, real or false corals and shells and even plants the sky is (well almost) the limit when it comes to creating a marine world for your fish and other invertebrates.

Saltwater aquarium decorations are fun to buy because unlike the other inhabitants of your tank they don't require any special care! You won't need to feed them, provide special habitats and they can't get sick or die so they are relatively hassle free! A tank without any décor is dull but that's not all.

A marine tank without any saltwater aquarium decorations is not very exciting AND it can be unhealthy for your fish. Using tank décor makes it possible to break up the physical environment of the tank and is important both for the biological and psycho-social well-being of the fish in your tank. This is because using tank decorations provides hiding places, areas for food to grow on and microbe activity that keeps your tank healthy.

Add to this the fact that saltwater aquarium decorations are nice to look at and fun to work with and you'll begin to see that décor is essential in any marine tank. The best way to choose your marine tank décor is to visit a store that allows you to see saltwater aquarium decorations in an actual tank, not just on a rack or a table.

Some examples of saltwater aquarium decorations you might like to try in your marine tank are:

Belching clams and treasure chests - These are bubbling and air actuated action ornaments. Spacemen, submarines, clams, and treasure chests are always firm favorites. Even a frog on a log and airstones, are fun saltwater aquarium decorations. The display should be well lit and there should be plenty of bubbles for the best effect!

So what other options are there for saltwater aquarium decorations? What about different and interesting backgrounds? You can purchase a variety of backgrounds like marinescapes, paint-on

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materials, foils, mirrors and cork stock. You can even buy an in-tank diorama! Display the background effectively and choose tank décor that suits its theme.

Rocks are another good choice for saltwater aquarium decorations. You can choose from sandstones, volcanic and metamorphic rock or even plastic. Some rocks don't have any impact on water quality while others improve the water quality. If you aren't sure of a certain rock, play it safe and leave it out. Try pieces of tufa, igneous, silicious/petrified woods), and brackish and African Great Lakes systems calcareous "base" rock. You can usually buy rocks by the pound or the 'piece'. Some rock types are natural while others are artificial.

Driftwood is a great idea for saltwater aquarium decorations. It might be self-sinking or weighted and wither chemically or physically inert or live. Don't try to cure your own woods. It's just too time consuming and expensive.

Corals and shells can also be used as saltwater aquarium decorations. Always try to use those from a natural marine source.

Marbles are traditional saltwater aquarium decorations. They can be used underwater - whole circular to flat, marbles and crushed glass are popular in marine tanks. However marbles don't make for a good biological substrate. They do provide fantastic color to any tank, though.

Faux natural saltwater aquarium decorations are another way of pepping up your marine tank. You can choose from fake rocks, logs, shells, coral, ships and more. Fake they might be but some look quite attractive when arranged properly; so don't overlook these decorations.

Plastic plants are another option you might want to make use of for your saltwater aquarium decorations. You can obtain some good likenesses of marine plants like sagittaria-turtle grass and vallisneria-zostera for example so don't overlook them and use them to supplement your real plants while they are growing.

Your choice of saltwater aquarium decorations is up to you but there are some general guidelines to bear in mind when making a choice.

Always make sure that your saltwater aquarium decorations don't have any sharp edges on which your fish might cut themselves. Never use any substances (rocks, shells etc) that might give off toxic chemicals into the water. Choose shapes and designs that make suitable hiding places for shy animals and good substrates for the growth of marine plants.

Also make sure that your saltwater aquarium decorations are very clean when you put them into your tank. Never use decorations from a tank where the fish or plants are ill or unhealthy in any way. Make sure that there are no spaces within the decorations where fish might get trapped and die.

The best saltwater aquarium decorations don't have to be particularly fancy. If you like spacemen and frogs go ahead and decorate your tank with them - it's your tank after all. If you prefer a more elegant style choose natural, rather than faux ornaments and study natural systems and try to duplicate some

of these environments in your tank.

You can easily glean this kind of information from books on marine biology or by doing some research on the World Wide Web. The more you learn the more accurate will be the marine world you create and this will make your fish and other invertebrates happy and healthy. The most important thing to remember is to have fun with your saltwater aquarium decorations.

But don't forget the health of your marine ecosystem. Try to find the proper balance between the aesthetic value of your tank and the well-being of your marine life. The only way to make sure that your stock stay healthy is to study, study, study the fish, invertebrates, plants and make sure you give them what they need to survive. Good luck and enjoy your saltwater aquarium decorations!

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## **How To Care For Your Saltwater Aquarium**

**By Sam Weston**

### Saltwater Aquarium Care - How to Maintain the Health of Your Saltwater Aquarium Plants

Good saltwater aquarium care means taking care of the fish and water quality in your tank but it also means taking care of your aquarium plants. Not only do your aquarium plants create an interesting home and shelter for your fish, they are also essential for the health of your fish, water quality and the tank as a whole. Proper, saltwater aquarium care, therefore, must always take into account the health of your marine plants.

Some marine plants are hardy and easy to care for while others need quite a bit of practice and experience. If you are a novice aquarist it is a good idea to start with hardy plants, as these are easier to care for. Once you have a bit more practice in correct saltwater aquarium care you can move on to fussier varieties.

The first thing to do is to decide what you want to achieve with your marine plants. You should do this even before you buy your tank. If you want big, healthy plants make sure you know what equipment you need, what sort of saltwater aquarium care is required and how much time it will take you to achieve these results.

If you are more concerned with the fish in your tank than plant life then it might be a good idea to invest in one or two plastic plants instead. Responsible saltwater aquarium care means knowing what you want and getting the balance right.

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While most marine plants do grow into lush, healthy plants they all need good lighting. This is so that they have enough energy for making their own food by means of photosynthesis. Without sufficient light for photosynthetic activity your plants will remain stunted or die. So part of correct saltwater aquarium care involves making sure that your aquarium provides sufficient lighting for plant growth.

To make sure that your plants are getting enough light keep the following rule of thumb in mind: For each gallon of water in a tank you will require 3 to 5 watts of light. Most aquarium lighting systems are below that level, however so you may need to shop around to find adequate lighting to make sure you are providing the proper saltwater aquarium care for your plants.

In the natural aquarium the fish and plant populations are perfectly balanced and compliment each other. Marine plants create shelter, shade, and even food for your fish! Plants that are well lit will give off oxygen and this creates a good environment for your fish. So proper saltwater aquarium care makes your tank healthy and provides optimum conditions for plants and fish alike.

The fish will, in turn, feed off the carbon dioxide released by the fish. Plants also feed off the waste that fish produce. This helps to absorb some of the waste that might become toxic to your fish. So as you can see proper saltwater aquarium care means maintaining a healthy balance for all the life in your tank.

To provide proper saltwater aquarium care for your plants and fish you need to make sure that conditions in your tank are optimal. Plant growth needs water which is at the correct ph levels. It also

needs the water to be at the correct temperature for growth and survival.

Unfortunately this might not fit in with the temperature requirements of the fish species you want to keep. So you might have to decide between plants and fish in some cases. Again, good saltwater aquarium care is always about finding the happy medium.

Fish also eat or tear away sections of plants and this might actually ruin the aesthetic appeal of your tank. Plants may be uprooted by the foraging activity of your fish. So plant care can be a bit tricky and does require some patience. One of the most frustrating aspects of saltwater aquarium care is the occurrence of marine algae.

Algae can really be a problem for the marine aquarist. Sometimes despite the best saltwater aquarium care - lights, substrate additives, fertilizers and CO2 systems - instead of lush plant growth you are confronted with algal growth. Algae can be very difficult to get rid of once it has taken root and it can really limit the growth of other plants.

Usually the aquarist employs various methods of saltwater aquarium care for combating this scourge. These might include using algicides, bleach dips, antibiotics (for cyanobacteria), manual removal or fish or invertebrates that feed on algae.

During an algal attack the amount of food and light is decreased and different amounts of fertilizer are tried - sometimes with success. Correct saltwater aquarium care results in some sort of balance being

reached.

The best form of saltwater aquarium care and algae treatment is to provide the tank with a water change. In fact if you could change the tank water daily it would be ideal but this is obviously not very practical. You should change 25% of the water at least twice weekly, however. If you can stick to this schedule the amount of algae in the tank will be reduced and your fish and plants will be healthier. A water change should form a part of routine saltwater aquarium care whether you have an algal problem or not.

So what kinds of plants can you grow in a saltwater aquarium? A variety of plants are suitable for a saltwater aquarium. Choose from grape algae (*Caulerpa racemosa*), Halimeda Halimeda sp, shaving brush algae (*Penicillus capitatus*), fan algae (*Udotea flabellum*), coralline bush algae (*Galaxaura* sp.), sea grass, red gracilaria (which your fish can eat) and many others. Proper saltwater aquarium care means making sure that your plants and fish co-exist in perfect harmony.

Proper saltwater aquarium care means really getting to know your marine tank. Do as much research as possible to ensure that your marine plants and fish have everything they need to grow, stay healthy and be happy. If you get it right, your aquarium will provide you with many hours of entertainment, fun and pleasure. Good luck and enjoy your aquarium!

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