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Your First Cichlid Aquarium

By William Berg

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By William Berg
of Sweden, for <http://www.aquaticcommunity.com>

So you're thinking about trying cichlids. A good choice. In this article I shall try to give a few examples of good cichlid aquariums that are suitable for beginners. I've tried to suggest set-ups that will be beautiful and easy to maintain, and species that are easily bred so that you might observe this fascinating side of cichlid behaviour.

This article targets those who haven't that much experience with aquariums in general and cichlids in particular. If you are a more experienced aquarist who is just new to cichlids these set-ups will still be good, and you have a lot of other options as well since you are probably capable of keeping more sensitive species than those suggested in this article.

Aquarium:

It is possible to keep some cichlids, such as *Lamprologus ocellatus*, in very small aquariums. However, for your first cichlid aquarium I would recommend a larger aquarium of no less than 30 gallons/120 L. There are several reasons for this:

- A larger aquarium is easier to maintain and easier to keep in good condition.
- Cichlids are aggressive. Some cichlids are much more aggressive than others, but almost all cichlids are aggressive and a larger aquarium makes it easier for weaker fish to avoid this hostility.
- Cichlid behaviour is usually more interesting if you can keep more than one isolated pair in an aquarium. For example this may allow you to see the parents guarding their young.

Water conditions:

Which water conditions you should have depends on which cichlids you want to keep since their preferences differ greatly. For your first aquarium I recommend keeping species that are less sensitive

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to water conditions, and if you choose to try the species I recommend in this article you normally won't have to think about water conditions. I don't recommend keeping cichlids from the great African lakes as your first cichlids if you are an inexperienced aquarist, since they have more specialised demands.

Feeding:

The cichlids I recommend accept all kind of food, however I would recommend giving them a diverse diet consisting of pellets/flakes, frozen food and occasional live food.

Species:

Now to the fun part: choosing fish species to your new aquarium. I will give three examples of possible aquariums. The first one has its origin in African rivers and is more friendly, while the second one features cichlids from Central America. I will also give a suggestion for a composition that has its

origins in the Amazon. However this composition is a little bit harder to get to breed and requires a larger aquarium. I would recommend at least 50 gallon/ 200 L.

1. African cichlid aquarium (30 gallons)
1 pair of kribis (*Pelvicachromis pulcher*)
1 pair of African butterfly cichlids (*Anomalochromis thomasi*)
1 pair of Egyptian mouth-brooders (*Pseudocrenilabrus multicolor*)
4 *Ancistrus* (plecos)

2. Central American aquarium (30 gallons):
1 pair of *Archocentrus sajica* (T-Bar cichlid)
1 pair of convicts (*Archocentrus nigrofasciatus*)
2 *Hypostomus* (plecos)

3. Amazon aquarium (50 gallons):
4 angelfish (*Pterophyllum scalare*)
1 pair of *Aequidens curviceps*
1 pair of *Aequidens maronii* (Keyhole cichlid)
6 *Ancistrus* (plecos)

Tank set-ups:

1. African cichlid aquarium

All of these species are relatively friendly and have different behaviours that will reduce stress between the different pairs. These species prefer a well planted aquarium and leave your plants alone so that you can use all sorts of plants. They also require hiding and spawning places. Kribis spawn in caves which can be created using roots, rocks and flowerpots. *A. Thomasi* spawns on flat surfaces such as rocks. You will have to leave free areas without plants and rocks to create swimming space and allow you to see your fish more often. Use fine sand as this promotes spawning of Egyptian mouth-brooders. If you just keep the aquarium clean and your fish well fed they will thrive and spawn in this aquarium. If you find your aquarium a little empty you can add some small schooling fish such as tetras to the upper water levels.

2. Central American aquarium

The species in this set-up are more aggressive, which explains why I only recommend keeping two species in this tank. Both species lay their eggs on rocks so caves aren't that necessary, but I would still recommend that you create a few as hiding places as these species can be quite aggressive. This is especially true when they are spawning and caring for their young. A sajica usually leaves your plants alone, but convicts often eat plants, so I recommend using more hardy plants such as sword plants, anubias and Java ferns if you want to use plants. Whether to keep plants or not is completely up to the aquarist. The cichlids will thrive with or without plants as long as you provide a few hiding places. Both species are very easy to breed and it is almost impossible to keep convicts from spawning. It can be very hard to find new homes for the fry, so I recommend letting the parents keep their young and see if any survive. In this aquarium some usually will.

3. Amazon aquarium

As I said earlier, it is preferable for this aquarium to be at least 50 gallons since these fish get a little bigger. Angelfish shouldn't be kept in aquariums that are less than 50 cm/ 20 inches high. These species are still easy to care for but require a little more from their keeper to spawn. The aquarium should be well planted with free areas for the fish to swim in. Use large sword plants or cryptocoryne

species to give the angels what they need to spawn. The other species requires roots or rocks to spawn on. Caves are not necessary but preferable, especially for *A. curviceps*. If you find this aquarium a little empty you might add some free-swimming schooling fish to the aquarium. Never use neon tetras with angelfish, as angelfish like to eat them. The same is true for a number of other small tetras. If you keep the water clean and the fish well fed they will thrive and with a little bit of luck, spawn.

Final words

I have given just a few suggestions for possible cichlid aquariums (there are a lot more) and when you get a little more experience with cichlids the possibilities are countless. Cichlids are very interesting and often beautiful fishes and many of them are quite simple to keep. These are only a few of the reasons behind their popularity. Try them, you won't regret it!

Article is written for [aquaticcommunity.com](http://www.aquaticcommunity.com) by William Berg. William Berg has 20 years of aquarium experience and is the admin at <http://www.aquaticcommunity.com>

Some Of The Best All Year-round Aquarium Tips

By Grange Aquatics

When it comes to looking after your aquarium you need to be focussed on providing care all year-round. Below we look at some of the most important points

Temperature Control For Your Aquarium When it comes to caring for your aquarium fish, temperature control is one of the most important aspects. Although we may really feel the weather outside, your aquarium fish are more likely to suffer from any drastic changes to temperature which occurs inside the

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aquarium. So the following tips are worth noting:

- 1) Ensure that you switch the lights off during the hottest part of the day.
- 2) Check that your heater is properly working and keeping a steady temperature. Water which is too warm may result in the fish suffocating.
- 3) If you need to make any change in temperature always do so gradually.

Regular Care and Maintenance of Your Aquarium

Regular care is needed if you have an aquarium. This regular maintenance should involve vigorous aeration and filtration. Make sure that you clean your tank out regularly to ensure that the fish remain healthy.

Aquarium General Tips

Following these general tips should lead to a better environment for your aquarium fish:

- 1) Limit the number of fish in your aquarium to maximise the amount of oxygen for each fish. It will also help minimise the number of times you will need to clean the aquarium.
- 2) Make sure that you think about the positioning of the aquarium - it shouldn't be in direct sunlight as this may increase the amount of algae.
- 3) Research the fish before you buy. You need to check that each fish you put into the aquarium is compatible with the general environment and with the other fish.
- 4) You should change 25% of the water in the aquarium weekly to help maintain a healthy water balance for your fish

Grange Aquatics have been in business for over 20 years and have a dedicated team of staff on hand to share their expertise in pond equipment and water features. Visit their website

<http://www.grangeaquatics.com>



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