

## My Cyprinid Community

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What is a cyprinid? The cyprinid family of fish has more than 1400 species. Cooler water species are found in North America and Europe. Examples are carp and minnows. In this article, I will be concentrating on the warmer water species from south East Asia. These are danios, algae eaters, sharks, rasboras and barb. They are omnivores and eat all flake foods as well as frozen and live foods. As the name implies, algae eaters keep a high percentage of their diet as algae. Most tropical cyprinids scatter sticky eggs. Lots of plants, rocks and driftwood give crevices and hiding places to allow some of the eggs to survive. In my cyprinid tank, I have too many inhabitants to expect any reproduction to be successful. Instead, I keep these fish for the constant action and colour.

I keep my cyprinids in a 30 gallon 36 inch long tank with a dark substrate and rocks. There are some real and plastic plants, along with some Malaysian hardwood. I use regular Kitchener water which has a pH of about 8.0, and is pretty hard. Most of the cyprinids that I keep come from swift moving rivers and streams, so I have a power head to make some horizontal water flow. Some of the fish sit in the current for a few minutes at a time, and then swim to a quieter part of the tank, kind of like going to the gym. The rainbowfish in the photo are temporary visitors, waiting to move to another tank.



Generally, the cyprinids have an elongated body shape, somewhat like a torpedo. Here are a Gold Barb (*Barbus schuberti*) and a Rose Line Shark (*Puntius denisonii*). The Gold Barb will school, but sometimes they are off by themselves exploring all areas of the tank. After a few years, they will grow to 7cm (3 inches), maybe even 10 cm (4 inches).

The Rose Line Shark will grow to 15 cm (6 inches) and is a very good community fish. When they reach about 10 cm (4 inches), it is time to move them to a larger tank. The Rose Line Shark is some times called the Red Line Torpedo Barb. They never chase other fish and frequently school to put on a great display. They swim in all areas of the tank. These fish are a recent arrival in the hobby, so expect to pay more than the usual community fish price. In the last year or so, the price has dropped, but they still will be one of the more expensive additions to your tank.



Here is a larger, older Rose Line Shark. They retain their colour all through adult hood.



Of course, the sharks in this family are not really sharks. They are called sharks for their shape and erect

dorsal fin. Another shark that I keep is the Bala Shark (*Balantiocheilus melanopterus*), at the top in the following photo. They are sometimes called Silver Sharks or Tri-colour Sharks. I bought a group of three because they like to school. Bala sharks are very slow growers, but eventually, they will have to be moved to my 100 gallon tank when they get over 10cm (4 inches). Their ultimate length is in the neighbourhood of 30cm (12 inches).



Also in the above photo is the Striped Barb (*Barbus johorensis*). These are also a schooling fish, so I have four. I would have purchased six, but that is all the store had on hand. These fish very rarely get over 10cm (4 inches). They are timid, and prefer to stay near the bottom of the tank when not feeding or enjoying the water current from the power head.

A smaller tank resident is the Cherry Barb (*Barbus titteya*). They max out at about 5cm (2 inches). The males get very red in the presence of females, whereas the females stay a brown colour, with a darker horizontal lateral line. They will sometimes school, but usually are independent swimmers amongst plants and in the centre of the tank.



A top of the tank dweller is the Brilliant Rasbora or Red-Tailed Rasbora (*Rasbora borapetensis*). This species is a schooling fish that likes to stay near the surface. Note the upturned mouth to easily feed at the surface. They grow to only 5cm (2 inches), so keep at least 4, probably 6, to make them feel secure.



A popular first fish is the Rosey Barb (*Barbus conchoni*). They are quite hardy by tolerating lower temperatures, and poorer quality water conditions. The females are a green hue, whereas the males are a rosy red colour that gives them their common name. The one I have is of the long fin variety.



There are many sucker mouth pleco catfish that eat algae. There are also many cyprinids that do control algae in the aquarium. The best algae eater to control algae on plant leaves is the Siamese Algae Eater (*Crossocheilus siamensis*), sometimes known as SAE or the Siamese Flying Fox. Do not confuse the SAE with the Flying Fox (*Epalzeorhynchus kalopterus*). The SAE

will eat thread algae, whereas the Flying Fox does not. The fins of the SAE are clear whereas the Flying Fox has yellow fins and sometimes black rays in the dorsal. The black lateral line extends into the tail of the SAE, but tapers to a thinner line. SAE's will school whereas the Flying Fox prefers to be a loner.



Now we come to the bad boy of the tank. The Red Fin Shark (*Epalzeorhynchus erythrus*) has a reputation of being territorial and chasing most other tank inhabitants. I have found this to be the case. However, in this tank, the aggression is spread around and no individual fish is tormented. This is the same approach taken when trying to house an aggressive cichlid.



There are many more cyprinids available. Several varieties of danios, rasboras and barbs can always be found at your local fish shop. If you are looking to set up a community tank, try cyprinids. There is a lot of choice. With a bit of research, you can come up with a

combination of colour and compatibility for an interesting community tank ■



All photos by **Zenin Skomorowski**.