

Setting Up Your Show Tank By: Phil Maznyk **KWAS** April 5, 2005

There seems to be an increasing move by Aquarists to not only have just a tank hidden away in some obscure part of the house anymore but to actually have a tank on display where it can constantly be viewed by members of the house and any guests that drop by for a visit. Today's aquariums are often sold as kits complete with everything a person needs to get the tank up and running. The only part remaining is whether or not that new tank will be placed onto a black metal tubular stand or will it be placed onto a wooden structure.



The latter then becomes not only a piece of furniture but a beautiful focal point to showcase your fish in the home. There are however some very important things to take into consideration. First and foremost it is

very important that if you buy a wooden stand to make certain it has been designed to hold an aquarium. Many stores now carry stands and canopies that will fit into the décor of any home. These are specifically designed with supporting the weight of the aquarium and its contents.

If these pre-fabricated units don't do it for you then there are always carpenters that will custom build you a strong and visually appealing stand and canopy. Even the popular metal stands can be customized and encased in wood giving them every bit as much visual appeal as a true wooden stand. Many people place tanks onto the top of dressers or tables not really knowing how unsafe this potentially is. We need to remember that a small 25 gallon aquarium when setup with substrate and water will weigh over 250lbs. Going up the scale a 90 gallon tank which has a foot print of either 36" or 48" will weigh over 1000 lbs when setup, a 125 gallon will approach 1400 lbs and on up we go.

Factor in the weight of large rocks or slate and this number will grow considerably higher.



Obviously it is critical that the floors sub structure is capable of supporting these immense weights especially when looking at tanks over 90 gallons. If you have a finished basement you will have to remove some ceiling tiles and determine if the

floor joists are properly spaced and secured in the area where you will be setting up your tank. If not you will have to support the floor by using a jack post or two and perhaps a 4 or 6 foot length of 4'x4' beam. It is always wise to exercise caution. A great article on supporting the weight of aquariums in homes was written by Kevin Bauman and can be viewed at this link http://www.cichlid-forum.com/articles/aquarium_weight.php

Having gotten most of the floor concerns out of the way you will next want to place the tank preferably in an area that is not high traffic and certainly not near direct sunlight. Try if at all possible to place your tank near a load bearing wall. These are structurally probably the safest areas. If your just not sure then contact a specialist who will come to your home and tell you real quickly where you stand no pun intended. Some people will cover up one or both sides of the tank to help keep sunlight out and also allow the fish to feel more secure as people pass by the tank.

If you are going to go with a nice wooden stand then a canopy is the next logical choice as it will hide whatever fluorescent light fixture you place on top of the tank. This helps keep the light in and in my opinion it just adds that finishing touch to your setup and enhances the overall look in whatever room you have chosen to place the tank. Moving to the inside of the tank, try and hide your heater(s) and filter(s) intakes and outlets. Why go through all the trouble of setting

up a beautiful stand and canopy only to have all the hardware visible in the tank. What we really want to see is just the tanks décor and fish.



This way the tanks occupants become the focal point. Unfortunately hiding our hardware is not that simple. Sometimes a heavily planted or rocky tank will help but for some of us

this isn't an option and that is where your own ingenuity will have to come into play. The possibilities are endless.

When setting up a planted tank, remember to place your shorter plants near the front and work your way towards the back with your taller plants. That way all of them can be viewed and the shorter plants won't be starved from appropriate light. Rocks should be arranged very carefully so they will not tumble and also in such a manner that they will give the fish safe and secure places to hide and feel less threatened. Place your largest rocks at the bottom. Fish seem to sense the added security and often will color up more as a result of having adequate places to hide and rest.



Be patient and take your time. Plan ahead how you want your new tank to look. Many times I've stopped and stepped back to take a look only to find myself re-arranging things at the last moment. It's far easier to do this without water and fish in the tank. Lastly don't overlook the background. There is nothing worse than seeing an otherwise gorgeous tank with several extension cords etc showing through. The tank almost looks 2 dimensional. The background will give your tank more depth and aid in making your fish feel more secure. Hopefully this article will give you a brief insight into what's involved in setting up a beautiful show tank in your home.