

My Divided Breeding Tank

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I've had many guests comment on the lowermost tank in the rack in my fish room, so thought I'd share a little about it. It started with an article in a magazine and a friend who cracked the back lower corner of a 65 gallon aquarium. I don't recall the magazine or author's name, so I cannot give proper credit. There are two major ideas at work behind this design.

- 1) To make it easier to collect fish from the aquarium.
- 2) To breed fish where the males are aggressive towards other males and the females.

In the case of my tank, the height of the 'shelf' was determined by the position of the crack in the tank at 6" above the bottom. Doing it again, I might make it a little bit higher, say 8". It extends 6" from the back of the tank, not a bad width, but I might make it a little wider also.

How it was built? I measured and cut glass to make the divider first. Then trying to centre it, I cut 4 pieces to form the "box" at the back, which then forms the shelf. I cut these pieces just a bit small in length, figuring it would make for easier assembly and that the silicone would fill the gap. I also cut a piece to lay over the crack in the back. I hoped that with a piece over the crack, plus the shelf above, that it should be sufficient to prevent it breaking out and the tank collapsing (It's been about 8 years since I built it, so it would seem to have worked).

As it turned out, the patch on the back, also made assembly a bit easier, as it supported the back edge of the shelf. Assembly order was install the centre divider, install the patch (skip this part in your unbroken tank), install the vertical piece on one side, then the top "shelf" piece, then install the vertical piece. Lastly top in the other side. All were done without allowing previous joints to cure, in order to ensure good adhesion (silicone does not seal well to cured silicone) Everything was held in place with masking tape until the silicone set. After allowing the silicone to fully cure (I don't recall exactly, but I think it was at least a week), I placed it in the rack, filled each side and installed an

Aquaclear 200 and 100W Tronic heaters on each side and added a couple of fish on each side to start the cycle. Using this set up. I never really used it for the type of fish for which the original author designed. His idea was placing one M/F pair in each side for breeding. The hope was the males would patrol the divider to defend against each other, thus keeping them from harassing the female and preventing them injuring each other.

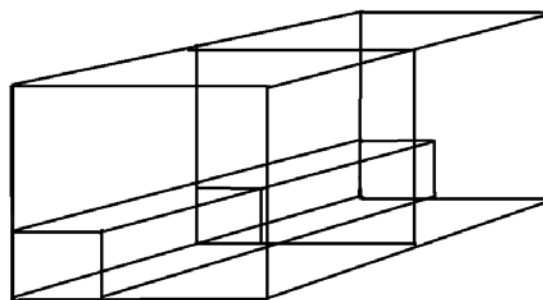


Image by **Kent Hunter-Duvar**

I did see a little of this behaviour with some of the fish I've kept in it. What it was really great for though, was breeding African cichlids and being able to collect them, without disassembling the rockwork. This was done by building the rockwork on top of the shelf, leaving the very bottom open with a thin layer of gravel. When I wanted to collect fish, I simply unplugged the heater and filter, siphoned water out into a large Rubbermaid container until the water level was about ½" below the shelf, then scooped up some water with a container and poured behind the rockwork until I was sure all the fish were flushed out into the channel in front.

It was then a very simple matter to net the fish confined to the narrow channel at the front. When I had collected the fish, I then used a powerhead and a length of ½" tubing to pump the water back into the aquarium. From beginning to end, collecting fish would take less than 30 minutes, making no mess and not disturbing my rockwork. I raised several species in this setup, including *Haplochromis nigricans*, *Julidochromis transcriptus* and *Pseudotropheus saulosi*. Even if you don't need the divider for aggressive males, constructing this shelf design in a single tank would make collecting your fish a much simpler affair ■