

Aquariumkeeping Resolutions

It's a new year, so why not give your aquariumkeeping the jolt it needs by following through with one of these hobby resolutions?

Posted: January 8, 2010

I used to do New Year's resolutions but not anymore. For me, resolutions tended to be heavy on promise but light on follow-through, which often left me with that let-down feeling about three months into every new year. The major variable in my resolution downfall had more to do with setting myself up for failure with resolutions too grandiose in nature than anything else.

Whenever you start out by proclaiming, "I'm going to do such and such every day, 365 days, in 2000 and whatever." Well, you've pretty much sealed your fate, as there's no way most busy mortals are going to see something like that through to the end. Ain't happening, not in 2010, not ever. There are just too many variables (read distractions) in this Information Age we live in.

Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against resolutions (really just a fancy term for goals); in fact, I think setting goals is a good, even necessary, thing in many facets of our lives.

If you like the whole notion of resolution (goal) setting, how about something more assailable, something that, say, will enrich your aquariumkeeping. In keeping with that thought, here's my list of things you can do in 2010 to take your own aquariumkeeping to the next level. These are things that are very doable and that will keep you excited about, as well as remind you why you took up, aquariumkeeping in the first place.

Make the jump. How long have you been keeping that same old 30-gallon gourami setup? Why not make the jump to reefkeeping in 2010? Or maybe try your green (wet) thumb with a planted tank. It may be a little more expensive but not a lot, especially if you already have a bunch of equipment that you can transition over to a saltwater or planted setup. Making the jump to saltwater or a larger planted setup will open up whole new worlds in terms of the inverts and fishes you'll be able to keep as well as the husbandry or aquaculture techniques you'll learn and master.

A few words of caution, though: Bone up before you ever put that first thrashing reef fish into your new marine setup. Marine creatures deserve our very best when it comes to learning how to care for them.

Join a club. Everyone needs friends, compadres, fellow aquarists to share war stories with. It makes the hobby so much more enjoyable if you have other liked-minded enthusiasts to share it with. Many hobbyists can relate to the incredulous looks, constant questioning about monetary outlays and the rolling of the eyes at new acquisitions perpetrated by the "significant-other" nonhobbyists they often live with.

Fish Clubs are great places to troubleshoot with more experienced aquarists who have been there, done that. Club meetings are also wonderful places to shop one's frags, newly hatched fry, plant cuttings and even used equipment.

Mentor someone. One of the big problems in the aquarium hobby is the slow bleed of the perpetually frustrated, or those who are hanging it up because of the labor-intensiveness and increasing expense involved in maintaining their systems. Perhaps, dreams of expanding their hobby to the next level have been put on hold for the foreseeable future because of economic concerns. Perhaps you can talk some of these hobby vets off the ledge and maybe even inspire them to try something new in 2010.

A related problem is that as the hobby sheds experienced members from its ranks, it is not making up the difference and growing tomorrow's aquarists from today's legion of ADD-addled, web-surfing youngsters looking for something different.

Today's shortened attention spans are ever-increasingly being courted by television, videos, social networking sites, Hollywood, popular culture, etc.

Imagine how great you'd feel by giving back to the hobby by actually bringing some newbies into the fold. Do you have an old filter, some lights and a tank squirreled away collecting dust? Why not do a little spring cleaning, and donate a used setup to a youngster? But don't just stop there. Show him or her how to set it up and how to maintain it. Provide the young ward with some fishes. And check in with them routinely to gauge their interest, to troubleshoot any difficulties they

might be having or to reignite their zeal should it be flagging. This is a great way for hobbyist parents to bring their nonhobbyist children into the hobby.

Big Brothers, Boy and Girl Scouts, YMCA, after-school programs are all good bets to find some future hobbyists in waiting.

Start a breeding project. Ever thought about breeding some fishes of your own? Guppies will breed and produce offspring pretty much at will. Barbs, gouramis, mollies and tetras are all relatively straightforward to breed. On the saltwater side of things, some clownfishes and cardinalfishes are “relatively easy” to propagate in aquaria.

Be sure to have a plan in place to offload any excess fry you don't want to keep (don't forget those aquarium club get-togethers). If you really want to up the ante, try breeding something that hasn't been bred in aquaria before. Of course, such a project will require lots of research prior to embarkation, as well as meticulous recordkeeping of what to do and what not to do and lots of patience. Being the first at something is really an exciting part of aquariumkeeping that is often overlooked by casual keepers.

Earn some extra bucks. Leathers, mushrooms and many branching SPS corals are quite easy to frag. Fragging is where a cutting is taken from an original specimen (probably a frag at one time too) and affixed to a plug or a piece of live rock. The original and the cutting are given time to heal and grow or regrow, in the case of the original, and then fragging can begin anew.

Hobbyists can use their frags to trade for corals they currently do not have with other hobbyists. For the really industrious, I've seen hobbyists who have grown frags in backyard coral-propagation setups purchase booth space at local frag swaps and rake in more than a \$1,000 dollars during a weekend show. Such windfalls are used to help support, perhaps even expand, someone's aquarium hobby. (For more about making cash from coral, see my blog “Profiting From the Aquarium Hobby,” posted May 29, 2009.)

Choice A

Choice B

Choice C

Do something for conservation. OK, you can pick a marine or freshwater conservation organization and donate some greenbacks, but I think along with donations that the conservation message is best served when it is internalized and shared with others.

Take some friends and organize an impromptu beach cleanup. Volunteer at your kid's school to bring in your nano setup to teach his or her classmates about the larger marine world and all that besieges it, from coral bleaching to plastic flotsam.

Take a pledge to buy only captive-propagated invertebrates, corals and fishes. Reduce the energy footprint of your reef. Really, the sky's the limit in this area. [IYOR Archive](#)>>

Other ideas. In 2010 you can move up in tank size, keep something you've never kept before, blog about your aquariumkeeping exploits, support your local fish store, get your kid a starter setup, visit and support a public aquarium, read a book or magazine about the hobby, try to master all the nuances of natural filtration, experiment or become a keeper of more than one tank. There are lots of other things you can do to broaden your aquariumkeeping horizons in 2010 – just use your imagination and finish what you start.

Best Cover of 2009 Aside

Some of you might recall that I polled folks a while back about what they thought was the best Freshwater And Marine Aquarium (FAMA) magazine cover in 2009. In my blog “Best FAMA Magazine Cover,” posted on October 25, 2009, three cover choices were offered: an illustrated tuskfish, a pair of clownfish and an anemone and a beautiful planted tank.

Well, here are the official results:

Cover A (Clowns) – This cover received the second highest vote total with 43 favorable votes out of 129 cast.

Cover B (Illustrated Tuskfish) – The illustrated cover received 29 out of 129 total votes.

Cover C (Planted Tank) – The planted tank was the winner with 57 out of 129 total votes. Hopefully, we can bring FAMA readers more “tank” covers in the future.



For those who voted, thanks.

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