

80-Gallon Aquarium Update

While waiting for a few more aquarium components, I thought I'd give readers a quick update.

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Planted tanks this nice take time. Don't rush in, plan your setup and figure out what your goals for the system are. Do these things, and you're much more likely to have success. As I mentioned in my blog titled "Planning an Aquascape," I'm working on establishing an 80-gallon planted aquarium.

The setup is coming along nicely. I have all of the aquarium furniture ready, the stand has been repainted and my décor is mostly picked out. I'm still debating about what pieces of wood to include in the setup. I haven't made a selection yet. I have my rocks picked out, however.

Otherwise, I have all of my equipment, including two canister filters and two powerheads. I'll be adding a compressed CO2 system when the time comes, but because I'm going to use an emersed growth technique to establish the plants in the aquarium, I won't need the CO2 until I add the water.

When using an emersed method, you start the plants "dry," meaning that you just put water in the substrate and keep humidity levels high, but you don't fill the aquarium with water.

The light I plan to use on the setup just came in the mail, too. It looks great. I went with a two-lamp, high-output T5 setup. The T5 is 48 inches long and houses two 54-watt lamps.

I've spent a lot of time cleaning the aquarium, sanding and painting the stand and generally preparing everything to get started. Cleanup took a little bit of effort because I bought the aquarium used. But the setup is looking good and as soon as I have my substrate ready, I'll begin planting.

Show Stopper

In my original blog entry about my 80-gallon, I mentioned *Hemianthus callitrichoides*, or dwarf baby tears, the most difficult plant I would like to keep.

A lot of aquarists who try to keep dwarf baby tears find that it doesn't do well in aquaria over the long haul if appropriate conditions aren't provided. Many keepers find that their dwarf baby tears end up "melting," or falling apart and disintegrating for one reason or another, especially when first starting out.

Generally, I think melting occurs most often because of the initial shock *Hemianthus callitrichoides* experiences when first submerged in water. Couple the initial shock with the system instability inherent in a new planted tank, and in many cases *Hemianthus callitrichoides* will melt away.

This is part of the reason why I've decided to use an emersed method. By allowing the dwarf baby tears some time to settle in and develop root systems, I'll be able to grow a carpet relatively easy and have more room for error when I add water to the tank.

Dwarf baby tears like high light levels and it does best in an aquarium when supplemental CO2 is offered. Some keepers report that if too little light is offered, dwarf baby tears will grow tall with excessively long stems being produced to reach the light source.

Because I want to grow my dwarf baby tears as a carpet plant, I selected a moderate level of lighting to hopefully encourage enough growth to cover my substrate, but not encourage algae competition with my plants.

Finding the balance between lighting and CO2 seems to be crucial when growing *Hemianthus callitrichoides*. With a compressed CO2 system, I'll have more control and hopefully more success with the dwarf baby tears.

Ultimately, I'll have to experiment and see what works. It will take time, but I think patience is key when we decide we really want a nice planted tank.

If we try to rush in, we're likely to make a mistake early on. I'm hoping that with planning and patience, I'll be able to minimize the number of mistakes I make with *Hemianthus callitrichoides*.

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