

Reduce Fishkeeping Costs

How to reduce the cost of the fishkeeping hobby.

By Lee Newman

Breeding desirable fish, such as angelfish, can help reduce the cost of the fishkeeping hobby.

Q. I have been thinking about trying to reduce some of the expenses involved in keeping my cichlid fish, but don't really know how I would go about doing that. I have several tanks and keep chocolate cichlid fish, green severums, blue acaras and freshwater angelfish. Do you have any suggestions as to how I might be able to make back some of the money I spend on my fishkeeping hobby?

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A. Sure, get a second job! Seriously, almost everyone who houses a larger-than-normal cichlid fish collection eventually gets to the point of trying to recoup some of the expenses needed to house and feed their charges – the problem is it's just not that easy.

The most obvious way of earning back some of your expenses is to sell fish – usually those fish you raise. However, with the possible exception of freshwater angelfish (*Pterophyllum*), none of the other species you have are particularly high in demand, so making some extra cash from those might be difficult. Freshwater angelfish, on the other hand, are always ready sellers, and most local aquarium stores are happy to offer store credit in exchange for healthy little freshwater angelfish. The store credit can then be used for food and other supplies that you would otherwise have had to pay for.

One of the other options is to exchange the species of cichlid fish you keep for those with more market appeal. In addition to freshwater angelfish, rams (genus *Mikrogeophagus*) and dwarf cichlid fish of the genus *Apistogramma* are always in demand. However, watch out for the pitfalls typically associated with making money from raising cichlid fish – the worst of which is the fact that what used to be a labor of love now becomes another job. Also, unless you're willing to not put a value on your time, or count the part of the electric bill and other associated household expenses that support your fish breeding enterprise, given a strict dollars and cents equation, there would be no way to make any profit, as the expenses would simply be too high.

So, outside of selling fish, how else could one reduce the cost of their fishkeeping hobby? Some are able to make a modest dent in fishkeeping expenses by selling excess aquarium plants. If you have a successful planted tank, consider thinning out the aquatic plants from time to time and taking the extras down to your local fish store – healthy, locally grown aquarium plants sell almost as well as baby freshwater angelfish! The other little side-line that can be somewhat lucrative is live food cultures. If you culture live white-worms or *Daphnia*, for example, you could package up small starter cultures and sell them to the local fish store.

Last, depending on your situation, consider getting a part-time job at your local fish store. Even with one shift a week, you'll likely be entitled to their employee discount program. In this situation, the store gets a knowledgeable staff member who spends his paycheck in the fish store and you get to defray some of the costs associated with your fishkeeping hobby by spending a little time in an environment you're probably happy to be in. Good luck with the finances!