

Oscars or Plants

Bonus content from the September 2009 AFI magazine column "The Aquabotanist."

By Scott Hieber

Q. Every time I buy new plants, my oscar tears them up. Are there any plants that can handle being moved and shoved? Any info would be extremely helpful.

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A. Oscars (*Astronotus ocellatus*) and plants are not a good combination. Compared to many of the more aggressive cichlids, oscars have a housekeeping technique that can only be described as something approaching a wild bulldozer. They will move objects and substrate to suit their tastes, and when digging a nest, will uproot and probably destroy any plants that are in the way. And because oscars grow to be quite large (more than a foot in length) and are voracious eaters, they need a very large aquarium. If you had perhaps a 150-gallon aquarium, then a single oscar might leave a portion of it relatively undisturbed — but I doubt it.

In my opinion, oscars are best kept in the South American rivers where they naturally occur. Even if you wish to tackle the task of keeping one healthy by providing ample space and food, this is one fish that is not suitable for a planted aquarium.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the September 2009 issue of *Aquarium Fish International*, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.