

Choosing Fish Aquarium Equipment

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The Equipment

The aquarium equipment we choose affects wild coral reefs in two important ways. First and most obviously, it ultimately determines how successful we are as aquarists. The more successful we are, the less livestock we consume. We know that better equipment will generally make us more successful.

As responsible aquarists, we must purchase the best equipment we can for the care of our livestock and accept the limitations of what we have. Having worked for a rather long period in the retail trade, I was always shocked by how often aquarists looked to skimp, either by taking shortcuts or by skipping equipment purchases entirely. "Do I really need a skimmer? It costs more than a hundred bucks ..." or "My bulbs are still lighting just fine, I don't care that they're 18 months old, I don't think I need new ones."

Obviously, better equipment typically costs more money than lower-grade equipment (although the implication that price equals quality is not always true — more expensive equipment is not always better). Ultimately, aquarists must take a realistic look at their budget to determine if they can really afford that dream tank, and they need to incorporate maintenance costs into their calculations.

Efficiency

For example, a power filter may be cheaper than a canister filter, but consider the cost of constantly replacing media cartridges versus the cost of refilling a container. Furthermore, weigh into this the amount of waste a power filter generates as a result. Much of the filter cartridge is not biodegradable, while the media itself may well be.

Consider that the efficiency of the equipment will not only affect its impact on the environment but also your pocketbook.

Lastly, consider choosing used equipment. I recently was able to purchase a beautiful 55-gallon aquarium with an incredibly nice homemade stand and wooden cap for \$60. Not only did I get a deal, but this is equipment that won't end up in a landfill.

I was fortunate that the tank caught my eye as I drove past a yard sale. Aquarium societies and online auction boards are another great way to make these connections. Some aquarium stores offer used aquarium items for sale (sometimes on consignment). If not on the store floor, such items may be listed on in-store bulletin boards.

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