

Keeping Tropical Fish in a Pond

Keeping tropical fish in a pond depends on where you live.

By David A. Lass

About the Author:

David has been keeping aquariums since he was a kid growing up in Ohio in the late 50s. He started a tropical fish store in 1970 and grew it to a chain of four stores and a wholesale import/distribution company.

He currently imports fish from South America and the Far East, and wholesales to stores in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. David is a member of the Boston Aquarium Society and the Aquatic Gardeners Association.

Q. I'm 14, and I love fish. I have a 20 gallon, a 10 gallon, a 2 gallon, two 1 gallons and a new 10 that I am setting up. In my new 10 gallon, I plan to keep six white clouds and a pair of paradisefish. Filtration is a single Whisper powerhead. I was wondering if this setup is okay, and if I can add my 1-inch female and ¾-inch male Florida flagfish.

I also have a small pond in my back yard, and I was wondering what fish would be suitable for the outside pond. Also, what kind of filtration and plants could I keep outside?
Erin Barta

A. Because you live in Florida, you can pretty much keep any fish you want outside. The white clouds and the paradisefish would both make excellent candidates.

You would actually not need much in the way of filtration for either fish, depending on how big the container was where you were keeping them. The paradisefish are anabantids, which means they can take oxygen directly from the air, so dissolved oxygen is not as important for them as for other fish. I have seen a pair of paradisefish kept in a plain old 5-gallon bucket. The white clouds are so small that they put very little strain on the biological system of an outdoor container, unless it's very small.

If keeping either fish in any kind of an outdoor setup, whether a container of some sort or the small pond in your backyard, make sure they are not exposed to constant direct sun. Especially in Florida, but also in other areas during the summer, the sun can raise the water temperature in a small outdoor container way beyond where fish are comfortable. The container or pond also should have plenty of floating plants. Hornwort or water sprite make good cover plants for baby fish; include one or both in any outside water garden, especially if you want the fish to reproduce.

If you want to provide filtration to a container, just hook up a simple air pump with a box filter or a sponge filter. If the pond is big enough, include some form of filtration that is apart from the pond, through which you pipe the pond water for mechanical and biological filtration. There are a large number of these on the market, and they all work very well.

As for your new 10-gallon aquarium, I would devote it to the pair of Florida flagfish and let them breed indoors. With all of these fish, either inside or outside, condition breeders with high-protein flakes and frozen fish food, such as bloodworm or mysis shrimp. When you see babies hiding among the floating plants, feed some finely ground flake food or live brine shrimp.