

Angelfish Cichlids

Keeping large and small angelfish together.

By Lee Newman

Q. I am thinking about setting up a 75-gallon planted tank. I would like to have angels — and currently have two large ones — but I would like to add several small angels. Will they be compatible, or will the larger angels attack the small ones?

Ford Stinson

Baton Rouge, LA

Photo Credit: Mark Smith

A. I'd suggest no more than five angels total. When properly cared for, angelfish can grow to about 4 inches long and more than 8 inches high, so five such fish would certainly go a long way toward filling out the aquarium you have in mind. Also, despite their outwardly graceful appearance, behaviorally they are still cichlids and are therefore prone to taking a significant dislike to subordinate members of a group. Limiting yourself to five angelfish would leave some room in the aquarium for the loser to recover from any confrontations in relative peace and quiet in the event that one of the more dominant fish gets a little rough.

Adding smaller individuals of any cichlid species to an already established aquarium containing larger individuals of the same species always entails some risk, and angelfish are no exception. The two larger angelfish could see the other angels as direct competition because they are the same species, which therefore require the same resources. They might also ignore them because they are significantly smaller and may not pose much of a threat to the available resources. It could go either way.

Other options include finding some additional angelfish of comparable size to the two you already have or starting over with a new group of angels that are roughly all the same size.