

Driftwood for Plecostomus

Is driftwood necessary as a part of the plecostomus fish diet?

By Ginny Eckstein

Q. We are new tropical fish fanciers and recently added a plecostomus (species unknown, but inexpensive) to our 55-gallon tank. We noticed in several books that driftwood is necessary as a part of their diet. Have you ever heard of this? Our local aquarium shop has not. For best health, does our plecostomus need wood in the tank?

A. Welcome to the wonderful world of tropical fish keeping! You will probably be very successful in your endeavors because you are reading and asking questions.

The addition of driftwood to your tank will not only be aesthetically pleasing — perhaps a focal point in your aquascaping — but it will also be beneficial to the health of your pleco. Driftwood is available at your local pet shop either with slate attached or as instant sinking ironwood. As with anything you purchase for your tank, rinse it off (no soap) before placing it in the aquarium.

I would advise against using driftwood that you collect yourself. Although there are various methods that hobbyists use for "curing" driftwood, they are time consuming and by no means fail-safe. I know several experienced aquarists who have introduced problems — and then lost all their fish — by using driftwood (or other natural items) that they collected themselves.

Plecos seem to sand down the driftwood as part of their diet. All species seem to prosper from the addition of it in the aquarium. Good luck with your new hobby!