

## Keeping a Fish Tank in the Garage

**There are a few precautions to take when setting up a fish tank in the garage.**

*By Stephen M. Meyer*

**Q.** I have a 60-gallon aquarium in the garage that is doing nothing but collecting dust. The aquarium is complete, with rocks, filters, heater, lighting and so on, but I have no place in the house for it.

I was wondering if it would be okay to set it up in the garage. I would like to raise some orandas or similar goldfish. Would the fumes from the car be trouble? Would I need to keep the heater in the tank when the weather gets cold? And, would summer weather make the tank too hot?

**A.** There is absolutely no reason why you can't set up a fine goldfish tank in your garage, using a few precautions. First, make sure the tank sits on a sturdy, stable stand. There can be lots of activity in a garage and inevitably the tank and stand will sustain bumps and knocks.

Locate the tank in a low traffic area, if possible. The less activity around the tank, the better. You also want to avoid hanging tools or other items on the walls near the tank. There's nothing like a shovel falling off the wall and crashing through a 60-gallon tank to ruin your day.

Second, I would not store insecticides, herbicides or other house and yard chemicals anywhere near the tank. One little spill and your fish are dead. Keep volatile chemicals — gasoline, paint thinners, etc. — in a separate storage shed if you have one.

Third, install a lid on the tank. This will keep pollution-laden dust and other harmful substances from floating into the water. It may also prevent the neighborhood cat from dining on your fish.

If the garage stays above 40 degrees Fahrenheit there is no need to worry about a tank heater for orandas. Some varieties of fancy goldfish, however, fair much better in warmer winter waters — where temperatures rarely drop below 58 degrees Fahrenheit.

If your winter temperatures are consistently below this mark a tank heater may make sense. Most quality tank heaters can be adjusted to work at a lower range than standard tropical temperatures.

You can use any standard outside power filter. Be sure to maintain fresh activated carbon in the filter to remove errant gases and chemicals.

I doubt summer temperatures will get any warmer than in an outdoor pond exposed to bright sun. But, water circulation from a properly sized power filter should help keep the water cool. Remember, goldfish produce far more waste than tropicals, so it makes sense to get a power filter that is even a little too large for the tank. If the weather turns unusually hot, you can place a small portable fan facing across the top of the tank with the hood at least partially open. The air flow over the water surface will cool from evaporation.

I would also recommend a tank light that would be kept on for five or six hours a day. Natural daylight tubes will help bring out the colors of the fish. Otherwise, you will find that their colors will fade. Good lighting is especially important for maintaining the rich blacks of moors and related varieties.