

# DART FROGS & TREE FROGS

## INFO SHEET

Dart frogs (also known as poison dart frogs and poison arrow frogs) are among the most colourful of all amphibians. The 170 species are currently known from the tropical forests of Central and South America, and many sport such vivid and striking colouration that they almost do not seem real.

The dramatic colouration of dart frogs is a warning to enemies that their skin contains powerful toxins that are derived from ants, mites and termite that the frogs eat. Many tribes of native Amerindians use of their toxic secretions to poison the tips of blowdarts, hence the frogs' common names.

The toxins of many species of dart frogs can be deadly. A single adult of the most poisonous of all, the golden poison frog (*Phylllobates terribilis*) can kill 20 humans! Captive-bred dart frogs do not feed on the ants, mites and termites from which the toxins are sequestered, and so lack the toxins that make wild dart frogs so poisonous.

Tree frogs occur in tropical, sub-tropical and warm temperate regions around the world and are so called because they spend much of their lives in trees. Many species of tree frogs have dramatic colouration to startle enemies, and some can change their colour to camouflage themselves.

Image 1: The red-eyed tree frog, *Agalychnis callidryas*;

Image 2: The red dart frog, *Dendrobates pumilio*;

Image 3: The blue dart frog, *Dendrobates tinctorius azureus*;

Image 4: The white's tree frog, *Litoria caerulea*.





# How to keep dart frogs & tree frogs

The following is a brief summary and does not include all of the information to look after these exquisite creatures. If you are interested in keeping dart frogs and tree frogs, please refer to the sixteen page dart frogs and tree frogs chapter in the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Dart frogs and tree frogs make fascinating pets. Many species will live for several years in captivity and are easy to rear. Select an enclosure that is at least 40 cm long, 30 cm wide and 40 cm tall (the larger the better). Glass or plastic fish tanks work well.

You can line the enclosure with organic substrate (sterilised soil, peat, moss etc.), but these materials often rot or sour quickly, and can cause the tank to smell. Alternatives include aquarium gravel, astroturf or reptile carpeting (available at reptile stores).

Add pieces of sterilised driftwood, cork bark, sticks and branches to give your frog furniture to climb on. It is best to buy these from pet shops. If you do collect such items from the wild, you must disinfect them to prevent disease or parasite transfer. Soak the furniture in a solution of 1 part bleach to 3 parts water for 24 hours, then soak again in clean water for 24 hours, then set aside for one week to dry. Also consider adding plants, small-growing bromeliads and airplants (*Tillandsia*) work well.

Provide a water bowl (10 cm diameter works well). Your frogs will climb in, soak and defecate in the bowl, so be sure to clean and refill the bowl daily with chlorine-free water.

Temperatures of 25–28 °C are required during the day and slightly less at night. Install a heat pad at one end of the tank, and always ensure that there is an unheated “cool off” zone.

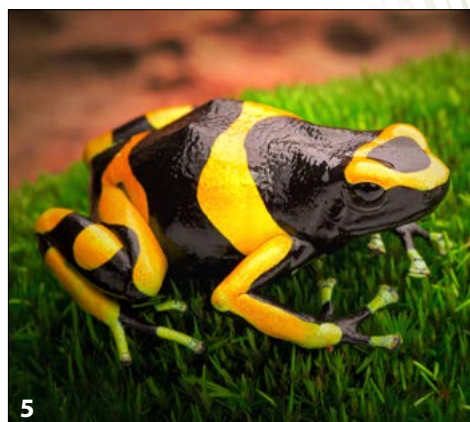
Spray the enclosure daily to ensure the frog habitat remains moist and humid. Add prey for your frogs to eat, such as small crickets or cockroaches. It is best to buy feeder insects from pet stores rather than catching wild insects as this avoids the risk of the transmission of disease and parasites. Prey should be no larger than the width between your frog's eyes. Your frog community will provide years of activity and enjoyment!

For more information, see the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Image 5: The yellow banded dart frog, *Dendrobates leucomelas*;

Image 6: The red striped dart frog, *Ranitomeya amazonica*;

Image 7: The Mission golden-eyed tree frog, *Trachycephalus resinifictrix*.



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**Buy the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book to discover the biology, ecology, diversity and how to keep dart frogs and tree frogs.**

**To order your copy visit:**

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