

# MANTISES INFO SHEET

Mantises are deadly hunters. Being stealthy, armed with large claws, and capable of lightning fast movement, they are the scariest predators you could imagine—if you were the size of a cricket!

More than 2400 species of mantis occur world wide, and are distributed across the tropical, subtropical and warm temperate areas of the world. They are ambush predators that rely on camouflage to hide themselves. Most species are coloured to match their surroundings, with greens and browns being the most common colours, though some even mimick bright flowers! They catch butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, crickets, ants, beetles, flies, and cockroaches, but the largest species in the Americas are known to catch small hummingbirds and frogs.

Mantises are armed with formidable claws capable of stretching out and grabbing victims. With serrated edges and large spines that penetrate and grip their prey, these extraordinary structures extend and retract in a fraction of a second, drawing prey towards powerful mandibles that are capable of quickly dismembering victims. The world's mantises come in a spectrum of colours and forms.

Image 1: Indian Flower Mantis, *Creobroter pictipennis*;

Image 2: Dead Leaf Mantis, *Deroplatys desiccata*, threat display;

image 3: a pair of Violin Mantises, *Gongylus gongylodes*.



# How to keep a mantis

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 mantises, please refer to the sixteen page Mantises chapter in the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Mantises make fascinating pets, and some species will live for up to one year. Adult mantises can be kept successfully in a variety of enclosures, including small fish tanks made of glass or plastic, large plastic jars, collapsible mesh butterfly boxes or terraria. The size of the enclosure is important. It should be at least 3 times as long, wide and high as the length of your mantis. This will ensure that the mantis has plenty of space to move around in as well as shed its skin.

A good perch is also important for moulting, as it is for hunting, so provide several twigs that reach almost to the top of the enclosure. You do not need to put a water bowl in the enclosure with your mantis. Mantises rarely drink from standing water, preferring to drink water droplets from the surfaces of plants, twigs or the sides of the enclosure. Sufficient amounts of water can be provided by simply spraying the inside of the enclosure lightly a few times a week.

The majority of mantises require relatively warm conditions, from 20–28 °C during the day and slightly less at night. Heating can easily be achieved by using a dedicated heat pad.

Mantises only eat live insects. You can purchase live crickets or fruit flies from many pet stores, or collect flies, crickets, moths, caterpillars, locusts and other small invertebrates from your garden. Prey items fed to mantises should always be smaller than the mantises themselves. It is recommended that 1 or 2 prey insects are placed into the enclosure every other day. Your mantis will generally hunt a new insect every 1 to 4 days.

Mantises will attack and eat other mantises, especially if housed in a small tank. All but very young mantises should be kept alone in separate enclosures.

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

Image 4: Jeweled Flower Mantis, *Creobroter gemmatus*;  
Image 5: Spiny Flower Mantis, *Pseudocreobotra wahlbergii*;  
image 6: Orchid Mantis *Hymenopus coronatus*.



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

**To order your copy visit:  
[www.weirdandwonderfulpets.com](http://www.weirdandwonderfulpets.com)**

