

SEPTEMBER NEWS

from **NIELSEN'S MARINE MATES**

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Welcome to our September newsletter. This month we will be covering some of our most often asked questions from both fresh water and marine customers. Hopefully this article will provide some answers to things you have been wondering about or questions you had not even thought of.

As always, we have some great fish and plant specials including the beautiful banana wrasse. The almost fluorescent yellow colouration of these fish make them a real feature in the marine aquarium. Continuing on the yellow theme, we have gold sucking catfish on special for the freshwater aquarium and also for freshwater, either aquarium or pond, the bunches of giant vallisneria are great value this month.

So we hope to see you soon and until next month - good fishkeeping.

FRESHWATER FISH OF THE MONTH – GOLD SUCKING CATFISH

Sucking Catfish are great algae eaters and thus are a useful addition to the aquarium. The standard colour



is brown which is possibly a little dull, but

this gold colour version is a nice highlight in the tank. For some unknown reason the gold version seem to be very peaceful in comparison to the brown suckers which can be inclined to pester other fish.

Whilst Sucking Catfish eat algae, their food should be supplemented with sinking pellets and algae discs as they will rarely get enough nutrition from algae alone.

Though not a true cold water fish, Sucking Catfish will usually tolerate cooler temperatures than most tropical fish. Normally \$7.99

THIS MONTH ONLY \$5.99

MARINE FISH OF THE MONTH – BANANA WRASSE

The bright citrus yellow of this fish makes it a real standout in the marine aquarium.



Banana Wrasse tend to mind their own business

in the tank so make a great community fish being compatible with most tank mates of suitable size. Almost all wrasse will bury in the substrate to rest and whilst Banana Wrasse will certainly do this at times, it is generally out and about and on display once it is settled in the tank. This fish is easy to feed on frozen marine foods, brine shrimp and dried foods. Usually \$39.00.

SEPTEMBER SPECIAL \$33.00.

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COULD YOU TELL ME???? FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is my marine tank is too salty?

Firstly, make sure that your hydrometer is reading correctly. Check to see if bubbles are adhering to the hydrometer or, in the case of a chamber hydrometer, to the floating arm as these will cause a faulty reading. Tap the hydrometer gently to pop any bubbles. Collect the water for testing away from protein skimmer outlets, air stones or the like where they may be bubbles in the water and place floating hydrometers well away also. It is good practice to wash any new hydrometer with warm water to wash away any build-up of oils etc. which may attract bubbles.

Secondly, you should be topping up your tank from evaporation with fresh water. If you are using salt water, then this will cause you aquarium water to become more salty over time as only water is lost from evaporation, leaving the salt behind. Salt water is only used when doing a water change and you should always check that the salinity is correct in both the tank and the new water before doing such a change. If using artificial salt, be sure to allow enough time for the salt to dissolve and check again with a hydrometer before using.

Do I need to buy test kits? If you own an aquarium, you should own at least a basic range of test kits. The cost is very low compared to the value of the stock you can lose if things go wrong. When people say they are losing fish, we are sometimes amazed that anything is alive as their water quality is so poor. We would suggest that right from when you set up the aquarium you should test the water on a weekly basis. This way you can see the bacterial cycle take

place and know when it is safe to start adding stock. It is also good to record your weekly test results, as by doing this you can often predict what is going to happen in the future. You will get to know how often you will need to do water changes or, in the case of reef tanks, to add calcium and other additives for corals etc. Although we do not mind testing your water if you cannot find a solution to a problem or just want something double checked, it is much better for you to be doing your normal maintenance testing yourself as you will end up with a better understanding of how your aquarium is progressing. By testing regularly you will often be able to head off potential problems before it starts to affect your fish.

Do I need to feed my corals and inverts? The answer is **YES!** Do not confuse additives with food. Whilst reef tanks need to be treated with additives such as calcium, trace elements etc., they do not replace food for corals and inverts. Whilst some inverts such as shrimps, seastars, urchins etc. will happily feed on small pieces of frozen foods and/or algae (gross feeding), most corals are filter feeders and require fine particle foods added to the water on a regular basis. In the case of anemones, many will both filter and gross feed. Anemones which are gradually diminishing in size are often doing so because they are starving.

Should I use tap water or tank water in my freshwater tank? Whilst the down side of tap water is the chemicals added to make it safe to drink, these are easily removed using a good quality neutralizer. Always look for a neutralizer which removes

both chlorine and ammonia and/or chloramine. The up side is that tap water does contain minerals and trace elements which are beneficial to fish and whilst the pH in tap water is often high, again this can be adjusted. Tank water, on the other hand, can be too pure for fish as it contains very little calcium, mineral or trace element content and often tends to be on the acid side of neutral. It, too, can be adjusted but often is more difficult to do so easily. Where available, we often find tap water, suitably neutralized, is the best option.

Which fish will be compatible with my fish? We are often asked about compatibility issues with both freshwater and marine fish and corals, to which there is often no definite answer. With freshwater fish, the answer is often a little easier than in salt – big fish eat little fish. So, if you are planning on mixing neon tetras with angels, do not expect to have your neons once the angels get a bit of size to them. There are a couple of general categories that most freshwater fish fall under, these being community tropical, cichlids and goldfish. Normally it is best not to mix fish from the different categories.

Marine fish are a little more complex. For example, you can generally mix several dwarf angels or several tangs together if each species go in to the tank at the same time. However, if you have had one in the tank for a number of months, it will often be far more territorial against another of the same species when added at a later date. We also find that fish do not seem to read books or the internet and don't always act the way it is said they should, nor the same as other members of the same species. So, although we may say

something should be O.K. , there is no absolute guarantee that this will be the case, due to different fish acting in a different manner than the norm. You may very well be the best judge as you will have observed the personality of the fish already in the tank.

The same applies with the question '**Will my fish eat my coral?**' In some cases we can say definitely, yes, whilst in others the answer is maybe. Using dwarf angels, again, as an example, some, such as flame angels, are normally fine in coral tanks but on occasions there may be one which will nip at certain corals. One may pick at a certain type of coral, whilst another may leave it alone. We have had a flame angel in the display tank for many years without a problem, but I am sure that someone who reads this will say that their flame angel ate all my whatever species of coral. We are always happy to give advice on compatibility but, as you will realize, sometimes there is no right or wrong answer, even though we strive to give the best advice we can. Fishkeeping is not an exact science and there is always going to be that non-conformist fish!

I stirred up my substrate when water changing and my fish died. Why?

Whether yours is a fresh or salt water tank, it is dangerous to have extremely thick layers of gravel and even more so, fine sand, in the bottom of the tank. If there is no flow-through of water through the substrate and it compacts down, anaerobic bacteria, often seen as black areas in the substrate, can form and this can release poisonous gases when stirred up. For this reason, don't use very thick layers and preferably none at all under very large rocks or heavy objects.

FRESHWATER PLANT OF THE MONTH – GIANT VALLISNERIA

As the name implies, this is the largest of the Vallisneria group of plants. It has broad strappy green leaves which can grow to quite a length but can be trimmed to suit the tank height. This plant



grows from suckers and will multiply quite well in tanks with good water quality and lighting. Giant Val is an ideal background plant, providing a lush green screen across the back of the tank and complementing smaller plants placed in front.

Giant Val is also suitable for outdoor ponds, tolerating cold water quite well and, as a heavier leafed plant, stands up to gold fish and other plant eaters quite well.

Normally \$6.50 bunch.

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL \$5.50.

CHILLER ALERT!

We expect to have a good range of chillers arriving in stock early this month. Get in early before the hot weather!

ACCLIMATING NEW FISH TO THE AQUARIUM

Hopefully, you will have transported your fish home as quickly as possible and kept them warm/cool according to the weather conditions. Please bring an esky or ask if there is a styrene box available to transport your fish and even then, don't leave your fish shut in the car while you go for a coffee – even our coffee shop! Upon arriving home, ideally, and especially for very sensitive fish, empty the fish and the water from the transport bag into a bucket, then use some airline tubing and a valve

to drip water from your aquarium slowly into the bucket. Do this until you have doubled the volume of water in the bucket (often an hour or more) and then net the fish out and place in your aquarium. Do not put the water from the bucket back into the aquarium. Top the tank up with new water. This method will slowly adjust the transport water to be similar to your tank water and will ease the stress when introducing a new fish.

Now the water quality has been equalized, there may be further difficulties if some of the original inhabitants take exception to a new fish invading their territory. If this occurs, turn out the lights or cover the tank. The darkness will usually cause the fish to rest, giving the new one time to adjust. Alternatively, feeding the fish may distract the old fish. If the attack is prolonged or especially vicious then isolating out the attacker for a week or so may give the new fish time to establish territory. It is generally useless taking out the weaker fish as it will usually just be attacked again when reintroduced into the tank.

Over the next few weeks, pay close attention to the health of your fish. Stress is one of the biggest causes of disease in aquarium fish and moving house is not only stressful for people! Check fish regularly for signs of white spots, fungus, torn fins etc., and be sure to check all of the fish, not just the new one as all of the fish in the tank will need to re-establish their place in the pecking order and protect their territory. Don't delay in treating your fish or seeking advice if any signs of disease are apparent.

SPECIALS IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE AVAILABLE ONLY FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER UNLESS SOONER SOLD OUT.