

Buying a Bearded Dragon?

5 Top First Things to Know

By: The Prodigal Dragons' Lair Ladies



INTRODUCTION

We are The Prodigal Dragons' Lair Ladies and we are here to provide not only products and bearded dragons, but also to help make sure you and your reptile have all the information, advice, and support you need for a happy healthy friendship! Bearded Dragons are expensive pets starting out, but we will share some money saving tips and give you ideas and examples with our setups and share some links where we've purchased. Here are the top five things to know BEFORE purchasing your new pet.

1. Cage Size

You will end up needing a 4'x2'x2' enclosure for a full-grown bearded dragon, that is the equivalent to a 120-gal tank. Our suggestion, save yourself some hassle and get this size enclosure from the get-go. You will go through numerous tanks in a short amount of time, as your dragon friend will grow quickly especially within the first year. Going this route will save you a lot of money and your bearded dragon from a lot of stress from the constant changes.

We currently have two different style enclosures: Reptile Supply 4x2x2 (available here: <https://dubiaroaches.com/products/4-x2-x2-pvc-reptile-enclosure>), and Symton 4x2x2 (available here: <https://symtonbsf.com/products/4-x2-x2-aluminum-reptile-enclosure>)

2. Cage Lighting & Temperature

Bearded Dragons need 2 types of lighting: T5 HO 10.0 UVB & Basking. UVB Bulbs should be about 2/3 the length of the enclosure (we use 36" fixtures with 34" bulbs). The basking bulb should be 75-150W, depending on the enclosure and temperature of your home. Have all of your lighting "justified" to one side of the tank, allowing for a hot side for basking, the ability to get UVB throughout the tank, and a cool side so your beardie can regulate its temperature properly. Speaking of temperature, the cool side of the tank should be about 75F, the warm side around 90F, and the basking spot between 100-105F. It's best to have a higher basking spot bulb wattage and a dome light with a dimmer so you can adjust the heat level. Most of our beardies like their basking spots *really* hot (~106F), while a few of them like it a little cooler (~100), and if it goes much over 100F, they avoid that area altogether. Always follow your Beardies queues, it'll prove a lot less stress for them and you! Hint: If your beardie always seems to be gaping while basking, try dimming the bulb a little.

Although most people suggest using the Acadia bulbs, we personally haven't seen enough difference in the bulbs to account for spending that much more. That being said, they are still great bulbs and highly recommended if you choose to go that route! Here's what we use: Strip Light (<https://www.llreptile.com/products/36314-t5-ho-single-bulb-light-strip--36>); Bulbs: (<https://www.llreptile.com/products/22475-zoo-med-repti-sun-34-t5-100-high-output-uvb-bulb>)

3. Cage flooring

The cheapest and easiest to clean choices are paper towels, food grade cabinet liner, or rubber mats. All of these options are easy to clean or replace, and reasonably priced! We prefer mats as they are easy to remove and clean, making Cleaning Day & Bath Day a breeze! (Don't worry, we have an article for that too!) Carpet is not recommended as it is hard to clean, can snag reptiles' nails, and harbors bacteria. Sand is also not recommended as it can cause your beardie, especially those under a year old, to get impacted and sick.

All of our enclosures are floored with this mat, trimmed to fit (<https://www.homedepot.com/p/Rubber-Cal-X-Derm-1-16-in-x-48-in-x-36-in-60A-Textured-Recycled-Rubber-Sheet-20-134-0062-36-036/304275882>)

4. Cage decorations

The first two essential items for any bearded dragon cage is a hide and a basking spot. These are essential for your dragons' health! What's the difference? A Hide is something your beardie can go in that is completely covered except for the entrance/exit. A perfect dark place to sleep or...hide! On the other hand, a Basking Spot is an elevated place for your lizard to Pancake after eating, or first thing in the morning after lights on. Anytime is Pancake time, honestly. As far as other decorations, anything to climb on or hide under is considered good enrichment for reptiles! We have slated basking spots, hides, branches, and pavers throughout the enclosures to ensure there's plenty of places to climb and run as well as some rougher surfaces to scratch on when shedding.

5. Last but not least, what do we eat?

Bugs, Bugs, and more Bugs!! Yes, this is always the favorite, but not the only thing your Bearded Dragon should be eating. Always offer fresh greens daily, veggies are great too! The best options are your Greens (collards, mustard). Kale and Cilantro is more of a "treat." As far as other vegetables, the list is a lot longer: Butternut squash, bell pepper, carrots, cucumbers, zucchini & zucchini squash seem to be the favorites over here. Blueberries, apples, and strawberries are ok as an occasional treat as reptiles process sugars differently than us and too much can make them sick and cause health problems. When it comes to bugs, the staple feeders are Dubia Roaches, Crickets, Mealworms, and BSFL. Hornworms, Butterworms, and Waxworms are great treats - they have a lot of moisture, but also a lot of fat. Superworms are also a great staple feeder, but they do bite (as well as crickets), so just keep an eye out if you use them! Also, keep in mind it's best to offer a variety of feeders, no one wants to eat the same thing everyday. Plus,

that's the only way to ensure your beardedie is getting everything it needs; even dusting your feeders can still leave gaps in nutrition.