



## Saltwater Aquarium Start Up Check List

### **You will need:**

- Tank kit (tank, protein skimmer, pump, LED light)
- Mixed salt water: specific gravity = 1.023  
(to measure specific gravity use : hydrometer or refractometer)
- Sand
- Beneficial bacteria
- Water jugs- 30% of your tank volume. (for water changes and top off)
- Decorations
- Test strips

### **Clean Up Crew**

*Astrea snails, sea urchins, turbo snails, nerite snails* - cleans glass

*Nasarius snails, sand sifting star fish and sea cucumbers*- cleans sand

*Serpent star and brittle star*- eat leftover food and dead animals

*Hermit crabs (blue legged, red legged, scarlet)*- eat algae, scavenges wastes such as dead stuff, and left over food

*Emerald crabs*- eat any algae. Especially bubble algae

*Peppermint shrimp*- eats aiptasia (glass anemone), scavenges wastes such as unseen dead snails, leftover food, etc.

*Skunk cleaner shrimp*- eats parasites off of fish, keeps fish clean and healthy

### **Example: For 24 gallon tank** - (\*start with these items) Add animals gradually

- 5-10 snails
- \*10-20 hermit crabs
- One peppermint shrimp
- 2-3 emerald crabs
- 1-2 sea urchin
- \*5-10 Nasarius snail (5 if bigger ones)
- 1-2 serpent stars
- 1 sand sifting star

### **Set up tank, add sand, rock and saltwater.**

Two options:

1. Use clean up crew to cycle tank. Feed with frozen fish food or dry flake food once a day. Takes 6-8 weeks to cycle tank. Takes approx. 6 months for tank to become established.
2. Use clean up crew to cycle the tank and also add live sand, cycled water, and beneficial bacteria. Feed with frozen fish food or dry flake food once a day. Test water in a week to see if it's ready to put more animals in. Nitrite and ammonia must be zero to add more animals to tank.

## Saltwater Aquarium Start Up Check List Continued

### **Corals in order of difficulty:**

- Soft corals are easiest.
  - Some examples of soft corals: green star polyp, zooanthids, leather corals
- Next in difficulty is (LPS)) large polyp stony coral.
  - Some examples: euphyllia, favia, duncan polyps.
- Most difficult are (SPS) small polyp stony coral.
  - Among these the acroporas are hardest SPS to keep.
  - Montipora, stylopora, pocillopora and Seriatopora (bird nest) are easier SPS.

When adding coral, start with hardy corals first-soft corals

When adding fish, add hardy fish first -damsels.

\*\*\*Add animals slowly in the beginning because tank isn't established yet. \*\*\*

### **When do I do the water changes?**

After nitrogen cycle is complete (when ammonia and nitrite is zero) then you need to change water. Change 10-20% of water once a week with new salt water depending on bioload.

Top off tank with RO water if water level lowers due to evaporation.

**Lighting**- need stronger light to keep Acroporas.

\*\*\*Because you're setting up an ecosystem, it takes around 6 months for ecological succession to complete. Growing plankton (phytoplankton, zooplankton), coralline algae, copepods, small crustaceans takes time. This feeds the filter feeders (corals, clams, sponges, scallops) \*\*\*