

TRUTH

Animal protein will eventually kill an iguana.

Lettuce is not a nutritional food for iguanas.

Eating gravel can cause serious medical problems.

During the first year, a 55 gallon aquarium is the minimum size needed.

Iguanas are not like fish. They grow quickly, and an adult iguana needs a cage that is 8 ft. L x 4 ft. W x 6 ft. H.

There is no such thing as a 'Dwarf Iguana,' some pet stores say this to trick people into getting an iguana.

These rocks can malfunction and cause fatal burns to an iguana.

Iguanas *must* have access to UVA and UVB light.

Iguanas need annual check-ups and lab tests.

They are smart enough to be toilet trained, learn tricks, and identify people and animals.

Iguanas are very hard and expensive to care for. They require attention and ideal surroundings. Some iguanas can be very aggressive, making them hard for a child to handle. Large iguanas can deliver very nasty injuries.

REPTILES FOR BEGINNERS

- Bearded Dragon
- Leopard Gecko
- Tree Frogs
- Pac Man Frog
- Newts
- Garter Snakes
- Kingsnake
- Corn/Rat Snake

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED WEB SITES

The Green Iguana Society
<http://www.greenigsociety.org>

Melissa Kaplan's Herp and Iguana Care Information
<http://www.anapsid.org>

Iguana Discussion Forum
<http://iguana-zone.com>

Jennifer Swofford's Iguana Pages
<http://www.baskingspot.com/iguanas/index.html>

Wong's Green Iguana Heaven
<http://mail.milagros.net/caiman>

Napoleon The Iguana's Home Page
<http://www.icomm.ca/dragon/napoleon.htm>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Green Iguana: The Ultimate Owner's Manual
by James W. Hatfield, ISBN 1883463483

Iguanas for DUMMIES
by Melissa Kaplan, ISBN 0764552600

PICTURE CREDITS

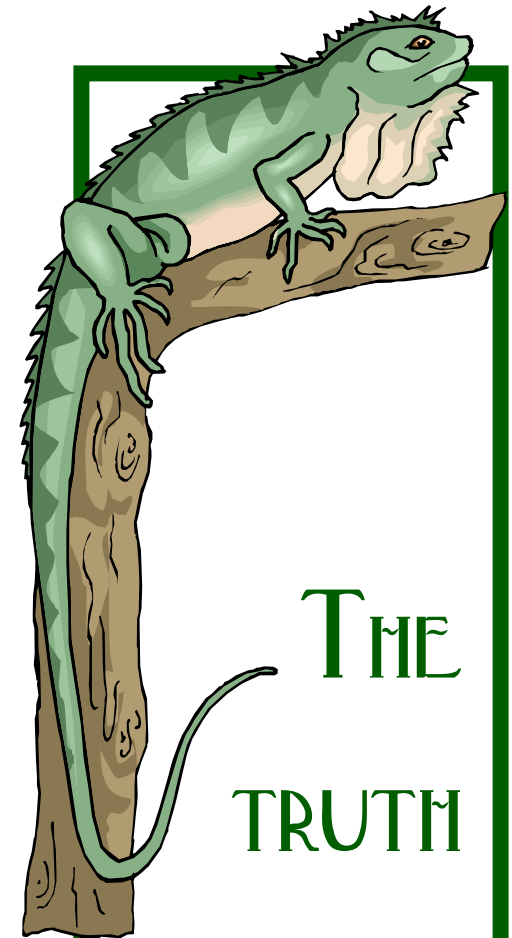
Juvenile Iguana by Stephanie Marshall
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THE TRUTH ABOUT GREEN IGUANAS

MYTH

Iguanas eat crickets, dog and cat food, chicken, eggs, and yogurt.

Iguanas eat lettuce.

Iguanas need to eat gravel to help them digest their food.

Iguanas can be kept in a 10 gallon aquarium.

Iguanas only grow as big as their cage.

'Dwarf Iguanas' do not get as big as regular iguanas.

Hot Rocks can be used to keep iguanas warm.

Iguanas do not need special lighting.

Iguanas only need to see a vet when there is a serious problem.

Iguanas are stupid.

Iguanas make great pets for kids.

HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF AN IGUANA?

A VERY BASIC GUIDE TO IGUANA CARE

FOOD AND FEEDING

One of the main areas that people make mistakes in taking care of their iguana is when feeding it. Iguanas are herbivores, which means they eat plants, and require a lot of calcium in their diet. The best way to get plenty of calcium into an iguana's diet is to feed calcium-rich greens and occasionally include a calcium supplement. The best greens for an iguana are: collards, mustard, and turnip. They should also be fed squash (ex. acorn and butternut), okra, parsnip, and small amounts of certain fruits. Always provide fresh drinking water too.

It's best to avoid spinach, kale, cabbages, broccoli, potatoes, and corn. Lettuce should also be avoided because it's not very nutritious. Iguanas should *never* be fed animal protein (yogurt, eggs, meat, cat or dog food, monkey chow, insects, or mice). Too much protein can cause kidney failure even in young iguanas. Commercial iguana food should also be avoided because they usually contain animal protein and lack proper nutrients.

Taking the time to learn what to feed an iguana and how to prepare its food is challenging, but will help to ensure a healthy iguana!



ENCLOSURES AND CAGES

When you go to the pet store and see the iguanas, they are cute little lizards. But when iguanas grow up, they are taller than many grown men and can weigh 15 to 20 pounds.

Imagine a full grown man living in a toy box...that's what many people try to do to iguanas. An iguana needs plenty of room to move around, a very tall enclosure, proper heat, light, and humidity. The recommended enclosure size for a full grown iguana is 8 feet long by 4 feet wide by 6 feet high, but many people choose to give their iguana a room in the house or "free-roam."

Daytime temperatures should be around 80°–85° F with a basking area that ranges from 90°–95° F. Thermometers placed in several areas can help monitor temperature ranges.

One of the most vital requirements an iguana has is for proper amounts of UVB light. UVB is absorbed by the skin and helps make vitamin D in the body, which in turn, helps to metabolize calcium. An iguana that doesn't get enough UVB light will develop Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), which causes deformities and eventually death.



Photo:YIL, Akira Yamanouchi

NATURAL SUNLIGHT

The best source of UVB light is natural sunlight. Providing time outside with unfiltered sunlight will help keep an iguana healthy, and even help to reverse damage already done. Of course you want to make sure your iguana is secure and supervised while outside!

TAMING

Iguanas are *wild* animals, and lot of time must be spent developing trust between you and your iguana. It's best to handle your iguana daily. Even then they can be aggressive—especially during breeding season. A large iguana can cause serious injury by biting or tail whipping.

CLEANING

It is very important to clean the iguana's enclosure and dishes every day because iguanas can carry *salmonella*, a bacteria that can be passed to humans. **Always wash your hands after handling an iguana!** Infants, pregnant women, and people with immune system problems should be very cautious whenever iguanas or other reptiles are present.

OTHER CARE ITEMS

Iguanas have very sharp claws and keeping the claws trimmed helps to make handling the iguana more comfortable. Iguanas should also take baths; a nice soak in a warm tub of water helps with shedding and humidity. The last thing required for iguana care is regular check-ups with a qualified herp vet. An annual exam should include lab work and a fecal test.

IGUANAS MAKE GREAT PETS... BUT NOT FOR EVERYONE!