

# Grass Frog Care Guide



## Introduction

Grass frogs, also called northern leopard frogs, range naturally throughout most of North America, except for the Pacific coast. They tend to stay near ponds or marshes, but can be found wandering into well-covered grasslands to search for food. Grass frogs are typically greenish-black in color with an array of irregularly-shaped dark spots on their backs and legs. The belly tends to be pearly-white in color and lacks spots. They average 3–5 inches, nose to rump, with females being larger than males. They enjoy feeding on all types of small invertebrates with the occasional vertebrate: beetles, ants, flies, worms, smaller frogs, birds and even garter snakes. An average life span is 2–4 years in the wild; however, on occasion they can survive 8 or 9 years.

## Safety Precautions

*Always treat live organisms with respect and proper care. For student and grass frog safety, minimal handling is recommended. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling. Do not house grass frogs with other frogs, amphibians or animals. Do not release animals into the wild. Follow all laboratory safety guidelines.*

## Habitat

### Enclosure

1. Use a 10-gallon glass aquarium for one frog. Multiple frogs require a larger aquarium. When choosing an aquarium, opt for a longer rather than taller.
2. A tight fitting screen lid is necessary as grass frogs are skilled jumpers and capable of escaping through small spaces. The screen lid will allow for ventilation while securing the frogs in the cage.
3. Include a 50/50 land to water environment in the enclosure. Split the aquarium using acrylic glass and aquarium-safe silicone sealant.
4. Use equal parts soil and peat moss as the substrate for the land portion of the enclosure. The substrate must be a minimum of 4 inches deep to allow the frog to burrow during the winter months. Cover the substrate with reptile bark and sphagnum moss to retain moisture.
5. Include pieces of driftwood, rocks and live or artificial plants as hiding spots. Driftwood also serves as a method of entrance and exit to the water source.
6. Use only hot water to remove buildup and clean the enclosure. Do not use disinfectants as frogs are very sensitive to such chemicals.

### Water

1. The water portion of the enclosure consists of aquarium gravel. Gravel can be sloped to allow entrance or exit to the water source.
2. Chlorine- and chloramine-free water must be used. Allowing water to sit for 24 hours will help remove chlorine and an amphibian-safe dechlorinator may be used to remove chloramine.
3. Filtration is optional. Constant water vibrations are believed to cause sensory overload, so a soft flow model would be best if a filter is used.
4. Water must be changed regularly, with or without a filter. If no filter is used, the water must be changed daily. A large water bowl is the most convenient method to do so. If a filter is used, change 50% of the water two or three times weekly.
5. Mist entire enclosure daily. Make sure to mist the land side of the tank including the frog, substrate and plants with a spray bottle of chlorine-free water.

### Temperature

1. Keep the frog's enclosure and water temperatures near room temperature, approximately 68–75 °F.
2. To induce hibernation in winter months; reduce temperature to 40 °F.

### Lighting

1. Heat lamps are unnecessary and often lead to dehydration or even death. These are best avoided.
2. UV lighting is not necessary for the frog, but it is not harmful. If live plants are in the enclosure, a fluorescent bulb that does not emit heat is best.
3. Grass frogs do best with a light cycle of 10 hours of daylight and 14 hours of night.

### Nutrition/Feeding

1. Grass frogs should be fed daily to every other day.
2. A variety of food offered to grass frogs is essential. Food sources include crickets, wax worms, fly larvae or earthworms.
3. Gut load the food sources by feeding them fruit, vegetables, dog food or flake fish food.
4. To ensure proper nutritional needs are being met, insects need to be dusted with calcium and vitamin supplements weekly or bi-weekly.
5. Avoid over-feeding. To determine if the frog is being over- or underfed, observe the body. If the frog looks round, reduce amount of food or increase interval between feedings.

### Handling

1. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling.
2. Minimize handling of amphibians; their skin is covered with a protective, slimy coating that can rub off by touching with dry hands, allowing the entrance of bacteria.
3. Use a small net or wet gloves to remove the grass frog when cleaning the enclosure.
4. If using wet gloves, support the grass frog's body firmly in the palm of one hand. With the other hand firmly secure the grass frog by cupping over the body to prevent jumping and injury.
5. Never pick up a grass frog by the legs.

### Disposal

Please consult your current *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for general guidelines and specific procedures, and review all federal, state and local regulations that may apply, before proceeding. Never release live organisms raised in the classroom into the local environment. They may harbor pathogens that could decimate the local population or become invasive. Deceased grass frogs may be disposed of according to Flinn Suggested Biological Waste Disposal Method Type IV.

### Tips

- Frequent handling of amphibians is not recommended. Their skin is permeable to salt and oil and contact with human skin may cause irritation.
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water before and after handling any amphibian.
- Have a damp towel available when handling. If the grass frog gets free, drop the towel over it, making recapturing safe and easy.
- Organisms raised in the classroom should never be released into the wild.
- Do not intermix species of amphibians within the same enclosure.
- Grass frogs' average life span in captivity is 2–4 years, but greater longevity is possible.

## References

National Geographic. [www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/amphibians/northern-leopard-frog/](http://www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/amphibians/northern-leopard-frog/) (accessed February 2015).

Exotic Pets. [www.exoticpets.about.com](http://www.exoticpets.about.com) (accessed February 2015).

## Materials for *Grass Frog Care Guide* are available from Flinn Scientific, Inc.

Catalog No.	Description
LM1171	Grass Frogs, Live, 2"-2.5", 12/pkg.
LM1172	Grass Frogs, Live, 2.5"-3", 12/pkg.
LM1173	Grass Frogs, Live, 3"-3.5", 12/pkg.
FB0211	Aquarium, All-Glass, 10 gal.
FB0213	Aquarium, All-Glass, 29 gal.
FB0283	Aquarium Screen Cover with Door (10 gallon only)
FB1352	Naturebed, Compressed Bedding
FB0102	Sphagnum Moss, Long Fiber
FB0585	Peat Moss, 4.4 L
FB0261	Aquarium Gravel, 5 lb. Bag
LM1164	Crickets, Live, Pkg. of 50
LM1103	Earthworms, Live, Pkg. of 30
FB0246	Aquarium Net, 3 inches

Consult your *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for current prices.