

Common Name: African Praying Mantis
Other Common Names: African Mantis, Large African Mantis
Scientific Name: *Sphodromantis centralis*
Group: Mantis
Origin or Range: Africa
Relative Size: Larger Than Average

Animal Description:

The African Mantis, also known as the "African Praying Mantis" or "Large African Mantis", is a popular mantis within today's pet trade. The Praying Mantis has attracted mankind's attention for several centuries.

African Mantids are relatively easy to keep being less sensitive to temperature and humidity than many other insects. They will, however, grow faster if kept in warmer temperatures. The African Mantis needs a tank, which provides enough height for molting. They are not at all demanding in their housing requirements. Glass tanks work well as long as they are sealed so the creatures cannot escape; remember to use a lid that is well ventilated. Some will seal their mantids so tightly that they die from not having enough oxygen. After acquiring a suitable tank you must place substrate in the bottom of the tank, 10mm is recommended. Twigs should be placed in the tank as mantis furniture. It is unnecessary to provide a super-humid environment because the Mantis will get the moisture it needs from its prey. Adult Mantids do not seem to need much humidity; light misting seems to take care of their needs. Young, African Mantis will need more humidity. For newborns, if dew is seen on the glass the tank may be too moist, one needs to make sure this does not happen, as some may drown. Humidity must also not fall too low; it should be enough to provide a humid environment that does not become soggy. In the wild, their habitat is mostly forest, and they subsist mainly on other insects. Captive feeding should take place every two to three days, though they may sometimes eat less. Adult African Mantids seem to do well on hoppers and black field crickets. Newborns need smaller insects such as drosophilae or pinhead crickets. If you keep more than one African Mantis it is important to keep them well fed. If they are left hungry they will often eat each other.

An average African Mantis will grow to a length of seven to ten centimeters. Colors will range from dark brown to bright green. Adults are fully winged. They are known for their incredible eyesight. Mantids are special because they have one ear under their thorax. The African Mantis comes in several different colors ranging from bright green to dark brown. The occasional cream variety is also seen.

Specific Care Information:

It is important to keep your African Mantids well fed, if you house them together. Hungry Mantids often end up as single mantids. They will eat each other. Also be careful breeding females will often eat their mates.

Breeding and Propagation:

Breeding the African Mantis is relatively easy. Distinguishing mature males from females is not difficult. The way to tell one from the other is by counting abdominal segments. The male will have eight and the females will have six. Once you have a pair of African Mantids it is critical that they be well fed for at least two weeks before breeding. This is not only to ensure good health, but also to prevent the female from eating the male after mating. The breeding tank does not need much decoration, some sources recommend using only a diagonal piece of corkboard. Once they are placed in the tank it is important to monitor them closely. If the female lunges at, or is in any way aggressive towards the male, he should be removed immediately. If things go well the male will mount the female. Once this occurs the male will move his abdomen so that it is touching the female. They will remain in this position for varying amounts of time. Some finish in a few minutes, while others may stay for several days! The average seems to be somewhere between 12 and 14 hours. The female African Mantis will lay up to several hundred eggs after mating.