

Get started right!

Most fish-keepers get started without adequate knowledge to successfully set up and maintain a healthy aquarium. This puts you on a buy-kill-buy-kill cycle of trial and error. We want you to be more successful, save money and start right. That's why we offer support, information and resources (like this guide).

Start with the best.

Big box fish stores tend to treat fish and plants like a box on a shelf. We believe that living organisms should be treated with greater care and respect. Additionally, most fish are shipped from domestic fish farms and overseas suppliers. It is cheaper for them to ship fish while they are small and fragile. But that often leads to poor outcomes for newer fish-keepers. That's why we quarantine, medicate and grow our fish on a varied healthy diet. You should start out with the highest quality, which gives you the best chance for success.

Don't burn out.

There is a lot to know about keeping fish. But, we're here for you and want to build trust and relationships. We never want you to buy anything you don't need and we help you find cost effective alternatives and DIY solutions. Don't get frustrated or quit the amazing fish-keeping hobby! **Contact us for help.**

Contact us for help:

Call or text: 651-335-1641

Website chat: AppleValleyFish.com

Social messaging: [@AppleValleyFish](https://www.instagram.com/AppleValleyFish)

BEGINNER'S GUIDE to Fish and Aquarium Care



APPLE VALLEY FISH.COM

Ensure fish compatibility.

Fish come from many different natural environments all around the world, each with varying water parameters. Fish behaviour varies too! Fish may swim fast or slowly; be peaceful or aggressive; swim at the top, middle or bottom of the water column; and be active day or night.

Only keep compatible fish together. If you aren't sure ask or check online. This helps ensure your fish can live healthy lives. **Incompatible fish may fight, be unable to compete for food or die due to unsuitable water chemistry.** You can either select fish based on your existing water chemistry (usually easiest) or adapt water to meet fish needs (may be complicated). There are many ways to adapt water in an aquarium to your fish's needs, including:

- Adding regional rocks, woods or leaves
- Buying purified or purifying water
- Treating water chemically

Use test kit(s) to identify your water parameters before adding fish.

Be sure to test for:

- **General Hardness (GH)** – calcium and magnesium
- **Carbonate Hardness (KH)** – carbonates and bicarbonates
- **Power of Hydrogen (pH)** – acidic, neutral or alkaline
- **Chlorine, chloramines, and metals** – use dechlorinator to neutralize

Compare your test results to the needs of your desired fish. Also, be aware of water softener salts, which can harm fish.

Understand filtration types.

There are four primary types of aquarium filtration:

- **Mechanical** – particles are physically removed from water
- **Biological** – beneficial bacteria convert ammonia to nitrates
- **Chemical** – harmful substances are absorbed or neutralized
- **Ultraviolet (UV)** – organisms are killed with UV light

Live plants help keep water healthy by consuming nitrogen as fertilizer.

Install your aquarium.

Set up everything your fish and plants need, which may include:

- **Substrate (sand, gravel or soil) and decorations**
- **Water treatments, healthy foods and plant fertilizers**
- **Filter(s), aerator, heater, thermometer, tank cover, lights and CO₂**

Cycle your tank.

Fish waste and uneaten food break down into Ammonia which kills fish. In nature, beneficial bacteria convert ammonia into nitrite, and further into nitrate. This is called the ammonia cycle. A beneficial bacteria colony needs to live in your aquarium, to continually convert all of the produced ammonia into nitrates. Nitrates can then be removed during weekly water changes. **Beneficial bacteria can be purchased and added or transferred from an established aquarium via cycled media (filter pads, wood, etc.)**

Acclimate your fish.

Rapid water quality and chemistry changes are harmful to fish. The water you get with your fish may have very different parameters than your tank. **Fish adjust best to gradual water condition changes.** To equalize the bag and tank temperature, float the unopened fish bag in your aquarium for 20 to 30 minutes. Drip acclimate to help fish adjust to your aquarium's GH, KH, and pH. Open the bag. Gently release fish into a food safe container. Fill airline tubing with water. Siphon water from your tank into the container with fish. Tie a knot on the tubing and adjust knot tightness to drip water slowly. When the container water volume has doubled, remove the tubing and gently release the fish into your tank. Avoid pouring fish bag water into your aquarium, which can pollute your tank.

Do weekly maintenance.

- **Remove detritus** – by hand, with a net or siphon
- **Remove surface algae** – with a brush, scraper or sponge
- **Rinse or replace filter media** – filter pads, sponges, etc. (as needed)
- **Water changes** – replace 20% to 50% of tank water with fresh water