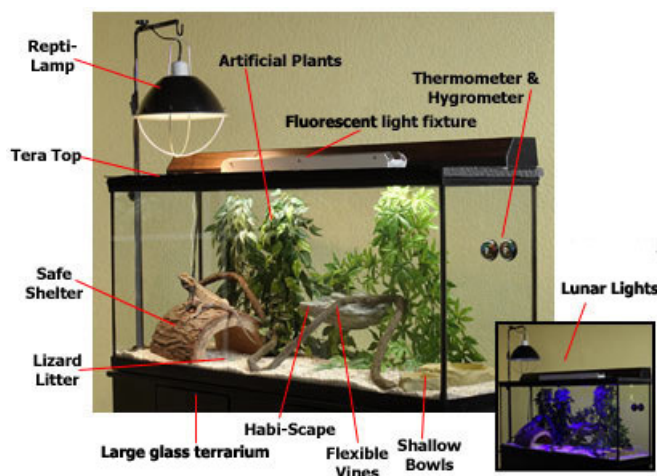


Bearded Dragon Habitat Checklist  
*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



To provide a Bearded Dragon a comfortable and safe home, you need to first familiarize yourself with his personal habits. You must also understand how to reliably maintain a temperature-humidity controlled environment. The following checklist matches up the basic behaviors of the Bearded Dragon with the habitat requirements necessary to accommodate them.



### Behavior

The Bearded Dragon, capable of growing to two feet in length, is fast on his feet, likes to climb, and has a territorial nature, especially around other males.

The Bearded Dragon needs fresh air.

### Needs and Solutions

**Shelter:** The adult Bearded Dragon needs a large habitat, at least four feet long and as deep as reasonably possible to allow for a variety of distances from the heat source. A [glass terrarium](#) is recommended for security, ease of maintenance, and pet viewing. To avoid the expense of multiple habitats as your pet grows to adulthood, consider using a partition that can be easily adjusted. Thus, a single large terrarium, 55-70 gallons, can be used throughout the life of the pet. The terrarium should be situated on a stable stand or table, out of direct sunlight, and out of reach of cats, dogs, or other pets.

**Ventilated Top:** The air inside the terrarium should not become too hot or stagnant. The top must allow for ventilation. The [Zilla Fresh Air Screen Cover](#) is a good choice.



The Bearded Dragon likes to climb.

**Climbing Branches:** Branches from your yard can introduce disease and pests into the habitat unless thoroughly cleaned. [Terrarium Vines](#) are a much better option. Bendable, twistable vines hold their shape in any exciting terrarium configuration you can imagine. The Dragon does not require live plants. If you choose to introduce them, be sure to research and select suitable varieties. Because there is a good chance the Dragon will eat them, you might be better satisfied with [artificial plants](#) which will add the touch of color you desire, but last much longer.

Most adult Bearded Dragons want a hiding spot and a secluded place to sleep.

**Privacy:** Your Dragon will want a [secluded spot](#). A wooden box or clay flower pot on its side can provide a good retreat.

Bearded Dragons sometimes ingest substrate when eating. This can cause serious health problems, especially among young lizards.

**Substrate:** Substrate can be flat newspaper or sheets of brown wrapping paper (the kind that comes in rolls). [Cage Carpet](#) is another safe, substrate and is much more pleasing to look at.

It is very important that the size of the food be proportional to the size of the animal. Malnourishment, seizures, and intestinal blockages can occur if hatchlings and juveniles are fed insects that are too large for them to capture or digest. Juvenile Bearded Dragons should eat live pinhead crickets and a mixture of fruits and vegetables. Adults generally have a mixed diet of insects and mixed fruits and vegetables.

**Food:** Many owners of Bearded Dragons keep [live crickets](#) for feeding. Other live favorites for adult Dragons include [Mealworms](#). Feeder insects should be coated with a calcium (no phosphorus) supplement 3-5 times per week for adults; every day for juveniles. The insects should also be "gut-loaded," which means the insects are fed nutritious and vitamin-rich foods such as [Cricket Quencher](#) before they are given to the Dragon. All types of food should be provided in [low bowls](#).



Though coming from extremely arid regions, the Bearded Dragon still needs water.

**Water:** Clean water should always be available for your Dragon. Always provide fresh water in a [low dish](#), no taller than their shoulder. Their food may also be misted to add moisture. Proper humidity is necessary for proper shedding. Especially during the winter months when the humidity is low, [mist](#) the Bearded Dragon with water several times a week.

Like all Lizards, the cold-blooded Bearded

**Heat:** Dragons prefer 78-88°F during the day and temperatures in the 70's at night. If a reptile is cold, he

Dragon seeks out heat to raise his body temperature. Proper maintenance of body temperature is important for digestion and helps ward off illness.

cannot properly digest his food and is more likely to become ill. Lizards like a temperature gradient so if they are cold, they can move to a warmer part of the cage and vice versa.

A primary heat source keeps the temperature of the entire cage within the proper range.

Combinations of a [heat mat](#) under the cage, incandescent lights, a ceramic infrared heat emitter, and nocturnal reptile incandescent light bulb can be used. A [thermometer/hygrometer kit](#) will enable you to monitor conditions.



A secondary heat source creates more heat in specific areas of the cage to provide a temperature gradient. To best supply this gradient, the secondary heat source should cover only 25-30% of the surface of the enclosure. The temperature under the light in the area in which the Bearded Dragon would be basking should be 95-100°F. Place a recessed, reflector, heat lamp like the [Zoo Med PowerSun UV Flood Lamps](#) or the [Zoo Med Halogen bulb](#), on one end of the terrarium top. Provide a basking place so that your pet cannot come within ten inches of the heat source. Make sure that the heat bulb is in a fixture designed to handle the heat.

A diurnal animal, the Bearded Dragon prefers to eat, rest and explore on a schedule regulated by daylight which varies seasonally, from 8 to 14 hours. He needs a source of UVB light to naturally produce Vitamin D3 which also helps him absorb calcium.

**Light:** Incandescent heat lamps do not provide adequate light in the UVB range. You should also use fluorescent UVB bulbs. Though these can operate and provide light for years, they cease producing light in the UVB range after 6-10 months. Thus, you should replace the bulb every six months.

To extend your hours of enjoyment with your pet, use a [Black Heat Lamp](#), which simulates the natural glow of the moon.

To ensure that your pet gets all of the light necessary on a regular basis, we highly recommend installing a [timer](#).