



pets in the classroom



CARE SHEET

HERMIT CRABS

Housing

Hermit crabs are social creatures and can live together in pairs or groups. They should be housed in a terrarium with at least 5 gallons of space for every 2 crabs. Because they do best in a tropical environment, the terrarium should have a hood to keep humidity in and your hermit crabs from escaping. Keep the terrarium out of direct sunlight and away from drafts.

Environment

Use washed aquarium gravel or fine reptile bark on the bottom of the terrarium at least 2-3 inches deep so a crab can burrow when it molts. Also, provide several hiding places such as hollow logs or huts. Because they will need larger shells as they grow, always furnish the terrarium with at least 2 larger empty shells per crab. Also include in the terrarium a shallow dish with dechlorinated water for the crab to soak in. The sides of the dish needs to be low enough that the crab can get out easily. If you have hermit crabs of different sizes, put a sea sponge in the bowl so the smaller ones can climb out. Some species of hermit crabs need marine or salt water in addition to fresh dechlorinated water. If you have those species, you will need to add another dish of salt water with the same size and depth as the freshwater bowl. Hermit crabs are extremely sensitive to metal, so only use food and water bowls that are ceramic or another nonmetal, non-porous material. It is best to establish a thermal gradient in the terrarium with temperatures ranging from 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 Celsius) in the cool area to 80 degrees (27 Celsius) in the warm area with a natural gradient in-between so that the hermit crab can move around to the temperature it desires. Humidity levels should be between 50% and 80%. Use thermometers and a hygrometer to keep track. Mist their terrarium with non-chlorinated water as necessary. Also include a fluorescent or LED bulb in the terrarium hood to light the habitat for 8 to 12 hours a day.

Care

Hermit crabs eat pelleted food supplemented with vegetables and fruit. If your crab doesn't have claws big enough to grab onto pelleted food, feed it 1 teaspoon of powdered hermit crab food or crush your pellets into powder. Include chopped dark, leafy vegetables such as kale or broccoli and chopped fruit such as apple, grapes and banana in its diet. Because hermit crabs usually eat at night, put fruit or vegetables in your crab's terrarium in the evening and remove any leftovers in the morning. Also give your hermit crab access to fresh, clean water at all times. Always add a dechlorinator or water conditioner to tap water before putting it in your crab's water dish.