



**Tundra Exotics*

Mantella Frogs (Mantella spp.)*Only

The Jewels of Madagascar

Mantellas are a large genus of mostly colorful frogs with aposematic coloration that serve to warn predators of their potential toxicity. Although they bear many resemblances to dart frogs of the new world in terms of their appearances and habits, mantellas are not closely related to dart frogs. There are currently 16 species of mantella frogs, and depending on the species, they can be brightly colored with many various reds, oranges, golds, yellows, blues, and greens. Depending on the species, some can be very brightly colored to warn of their toxicity, while others can be more cryptic in appearance. In order to obtain their toxicity, many mantella frog species will consume specific prey items in the wild, and derive their toxins from them, including certain termites, ants, and other tiny invertebrates. Many species of mantellas also have specialized reproductive biology, and may lay their eggs in tiny vernal pools, tree cavities, and standing water in bromeliads/other plants, and many will also carry their tadpoles on their backs.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Mantellidae

Subfamily: Mantellinae

Genus: Mantella*Only

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, mantella frogs can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

Mantellas occur only on the island of Madagascar southeast of continental Africa. Different

species of mantellas may occupy different environments, including tropical to sub-tropical forests, lowland forests, freshwater marshes, lakes, and swamplands, to seasonally flooded grasslands and other areas, savannahs, to higher mountain/altitude forests.

Origin/History

Mantella spp. Boulenger, 1882. . During the description of the first specimens from 1866 to 1872, Alfred Grandidier described both the brown mantella (*Mantella betsileo*) and Malagasy mantella (*Mantella madagascariensis*) and placed them within the genus *Dendrobates* based on their close resemblance. The genus remained within *Dendrobatidae* until the late 19th century. The Royal Natural History (1893) by Richard Lydekker included the genus *Mantella* as one of two genera representing *Dendrobatidae*, saying that they could be "distinguished by the tip of the tongue being notched; while in *Dendrobates* of Tropical America the tongue is entire.

Within the herpetocultural and pet industries, mantellas have a long and varied history, depending on the exact species, as different species and their availability would come and go during different decades, and would often depend on their conservation statuses. The Golden Mantella, as well as some other *Mantella* species, for instance has been available as wild caught animals since at least the 1960s, but captive bred animals remain rare. Unfortunately, most imports were doomed in captivity due to primitive importation and shipping methods, as well as a lack of general knowledge surrounding their care. This species is no longer exported in large numbers from Madagascar legally for the pet trade, as it has been classified as endangered. Some species were started to be imported in the 1970's or 1980's. Other species, such as Green Mantellas, were more recent, having been available as wild-collected animals since the early 1990's. This species, too, would then no longer be exported in large numbers due to them becoming endangered (Josh's Frogs).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced (depending on species).

Size

Mantella frogs are generally small frogs, although their size varies depending on the species. *Mantella* frog species range from about less than ½ an inch to about 2 ½ inches.

Housing and Enclosure Plus Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Enclosure System: Primarily Moist Terrestrial to Semi-Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. Housing for mantellas should be naturalistic and mimic their natural environment as much as possible. Live plants should be used whenever possible to help maintain oxygen and humidity levels inside the vivarium. A 10 to 30 gallon planted glass terrarium, vivarium, or even custom made enclosure with ample hiding and climbing areas should be provided. Humidity should fall between 80 to 100%, but provide minimal ventilation. Maintain most mantellas at temperatures from 70 to 80 degrees F, rarely above or below these temperature ranges.

Many commercially available hydrometers can monitor humidity levels inside the enclosure. *Mantella* enclosures can be maintained at around room temperature or sometimes with under tank heating pads in some cases. Covering 80 to 90% of the enclosure or vivarium with a sheet of glass can achieve the desired humidity levels. Also provide a "false bottom" constructed of quartz gravel, PVC, or charcoal to enable proper drainage from the vivarium. Substrates that are acceptable should retain humidity well and can include peat moss, fir bark, and sphagnum moss. Mantellas also benefit from misting, and should be misted every 1 to 3 days. Many commercially available automatic and manual homemade misting systems are available for use. UVA/UVB lighting is not required for mantella frogs, but can improve aesthetics and fluorescent bulbs can help mimic a 12 hour light cycle to promote optimal live plant growth by using full spectrum

terrarium or aquarium bulbs. Providing UVA/UVB in moderated amounts can also be greatly beneficial for your frog's health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Microphagous; In the wild, mantellas are almost entirely insectivorous to microphagous, feeding on tiny, live, moving insects, arthropods, and other invertebrates. In captivity, it is recommended that they be provided cultured flightless fruit flies, springtails, isopods, or pinhead crickets. Many of these food items may need supplementation with calcium, vitamin D3, and other multi vitamins, which are commonly available through many commercial and retail outlets. If left as part of a self-sustaining bioactive setup, feeding most mantella frogs can become very simple and inexpensive, although this still depends to some extent on the setup, size of the enclosure, and number of frogs per enclosure, and conditions should still be monitored. Feeding amounts and frequency can also still depends on the age and size of the frogs as well. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Mantellas are small and fragile amphibians, and handling them should thus be reduced or eliminated as much as possible. In most cases, there is very little to no risk of ingesting toxic secretions from captive bred/born mantellas, most of which derive their toxins from invertebrates consumed in the wild. All amphibians breathe and respire through their skin, as well as absorb water through this means. It is therefore important to avoid wearing any chemicals or lotions on your hands, which can be potentially harmful or even fatal to amphibians. It is also important to wash or rinse hands thoroughly, and ensure they are adequately moistened before and after handling any amphibians in order to prevent them from drying out.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

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Full List of Mantella species (Genus Mantella Only):

Mantella laevis Group:

Mantella laevis-Climbing Mantella

Mantella manery-Marojejy Mantella

Mantella betsileo Group:

Mantella betsileo-Brown Mantella

Mantella ebenau-Ebenau's Mantella

Mantella expectata-Blue Legged Mantella

Mantella viridis-Green Mantella

Mantella bernhardi-Bernhard's Mantella

Mantella cowanii Group:

Mantella cowanii-Cowan's/Harlequin Mantella

Mantella baroni-Baron's Mantella

Mantella heraldmeieri-Herald Meir's Mantella

Mantella nigricans-Guibe's Mantella

Mantella aurantiaca Group:

Mantella aurantiaca-Golden Mantella

Mantella crocea-Yellow Mantella

Mantella madagascariensis-Malagasy Mantella

Mantella milotympanum-Black-Eared Mantella

Mantella pulchra-Beautiful Mantella