CARE GUIDE

MINIBEAST WILDLIFE

GARDEN SNAIL

Cornu aspersum

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PROFILE

Garden Snails are molluscs – a type of invertebrate. They do not have a backbone, and have a soft body that is called a foot. They also have a hard shell they carry around on their back, which they can retreat into if they are threatened or if their environment is too hot or dry. Garden Snails are found throughout south eastern Australia. They were introduced to Australia from Europe over 120 years ago, and are now established in urban areas, most commonly found in managed gardens and disturbed areas rather than native bushland.

Snails eat a variety of foods, and so can be called omnivores. Some snails feed on plant material, some can feed on dead animals and some will hunt down other snails to eat! Garden Snails are herbivores and feed on plant material, however, they will occasionally scavenge on dead animals.

An amazing fact about many snails (including Garden Snails) is that they are hermaphrodites. This means that all individuals are both male and female at the same time. Snails still need to find a mate though, and once mating has occurred, both snails will be able to produce eggs.

Snail eggs are a creamy white colour and are laid in clusters in a shallow burrow or under logs where it is moist. Baby snails hatch out looking like miniature adults, but their shells are very fragile. All snails need damp conditions to live in, or their soft bodies can dry out.

FOOD

Freshly cut fruit and vegetables, such as cucumber, carrot, lettuce and sweet potato, and Mollusc Food (available from Minibeast Wildlife Bug Shop). Replace the food every two days or earlier if it is all eaten. The food can be placed in a small, flat dish or directly onto the substrate. These snails will also benefit from feeding on some cuttlebone.

WATER

Mist spray the substrate once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp, and the snails will stay healthy. Ensure the enclosure doesn't become sodden (too wet), and short periods of dryer conditions won't hurt the snails.

ENCLOSURE

The enclosure needs to be about 15cm H x 15cm W x 20cm L. Place the enclosure in a spot exposed to some daylight each day, but be careful it does not overheat or dry out in direct sunlight.

SUBSTRATE

Coco-peat or sphagnum moss, or a combination of both, to a depth of around 3cm. You can find these in the Minibeast Wildlife Bug Shop. This should be kept damp to wet at all times to keep the snails active. Place a small plastic container (such as a halved plant pot) or piece of bark in the enclosure for the snails to shelter under.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove any uneaten food after 2 days and replace with fresh food. Remove any waste products, and spot clean the enclosure. The entire substrate should be changed every 6 months, or before if it becomes sodden or smelly.

HANDLING

These snails cannot bite and can be handled safely. They should be picked up gently by the shell, and their bodies should be carefully lifted away from the surface they are climbing on. They will sometimes prefer a wet hand to move on. The snails will leave a bit of a slimy residue on your hand, so make sure you wash your hands afterwards.

COMMON ISSUES

If your snail rarely comes out of its shell, its enclosure may be too hot, too cold or too dry. Make sure the substrate is kept damp to wet at all times. This will encourage your snail to be more active.

TEMPERATURE

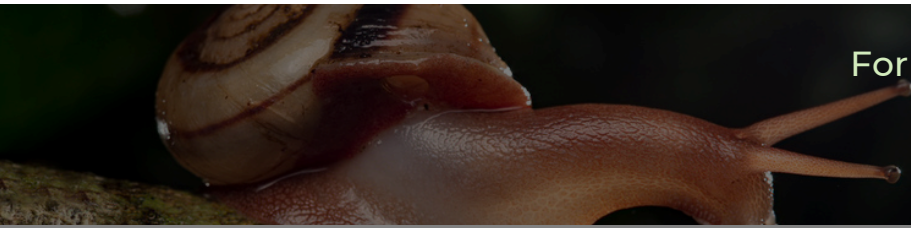
These snails will do best at temperatures between 15-26°C. At temperatures lower or much higher than this, activity is very restricted.

HUMIDITY

Garden Snails are quite hardy and can cope with a variety of conditions. If the humidity drops they will retreat into their shell until it is safe to move around. A relative humidity of 60-80% (achieved by mist spraying inside the enclosure and keeping the substrate damp) will stimulate activity. In captivity, Garden Snails seem to cope better with intermittent periods of lower humidity rather than prolonged high humidity or constant wet conditions.

About 2-3 years life span

These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild



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