



CARE GUIDE



GIANT GRASSHOPPER

Valanga irregularis



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PROFILE

Giant Grasshoppers are found through the north eastern tropics and across semi-arid regions of northern Australia. They are extremely variable in colour and pattern, and may be rich yellow and bright green as nymphs. They are quite adaptable too, and feed on a wide variety of plants, both native and introduced. As the name suggests they are large powerful insects, the larger females may reach 90mm in body length.

They spend the daylight hours sitting within foliage and will often bask in the sun to warm up, and then move into shade during the hottest part of the day. They will feed on plant material both day and night, and will jump long distances if disturbed.

Smaller males seek out females in order to mate, and cling to the females back while copulating. Once fertilised, females will lay masses of eggs in the ground surrounded by protective foam. The tip of the female's abdomen is equipped with small digging tools which enable her to drive her abdomen deep into the soil to lay eggs in a safe moist position.

FOOD

A wide variety of live or freshly cut common plants including: Happy Wanderer (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*), Banksia Rose (*Rosa banksiae*), Tree Lucerne (*Cytisus proliferus*), Yellow Walking Irsi (*Trimezia steyermarkii*) and various grasses. The food plants should be kept in a jar of water to keep them fresh. Ensure garden plants have not been treated with pesticide before offering. They will also feed on Grasshopper food, available from Minibeast Wildlife's Bug Shop. This can be offered in a dish such as a bottle cap, and should be replaced every 3 days.

WATER

Mist spray the enclosure once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp and the humidity high. The grasshoppers will drink from the moisture on the foliage and branches.

ENCLOSURE

The ideal enclosure should favour height over length and needs to be about 25 cm H x 35 cm W x 20 cm L. You may like to set-up some firm branches for the grasshoppers to climb upon in addition to the food plants.

SUBSTRATE

The base of the enclosure should be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from Minibeast Wildlife's Bug Shop). To allow for egg laying this substrate needs to be a depth of at least 8cm. Part of the substrate (one end) always needs to be kept damp (not wet), which will create a gradient of moisture from one end to the other. This allows the grasshoppers to choose the most appropriate sites to lay eggs. Alternatively, an egg laying tub can be placed at base of the enclosure (a tub with 4cm depth of moist of coco-peat). While substrate is not essential it will accommodate breeding. If you are not using substrate, it can help with clean up to put some paper down on the bottom of the enclosure to catch the frass (poo) and leaf material that falls to the ground.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove frass (poo), any spilled Grasshopper food and fallen leaf material from the bottom of the enclosure once a week. This can be done when the food plant is changed over.

HANDLING

This species can be handled but are a little unpredictable and may jump without warning. They can also deliver a powerful kick with their spiny hind legs, and may lose limbs if handled roughly.

TEMPERATURE

This species requires warm conditions (mid 20's) and does best if given a range of temperatures throughout the enclosure. The provision of a basking lamp at the drier end of the enclosure is recommended.

COMMON ISSUES

If keeping these grasshoppers in groups, ensure that there is sufficient space for individuals to perch, feed and moult without interrupting each other. Moulting mishaps (deformities) may occur in cases of over crowding.



About 1-2 years life span



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



50-60%



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