

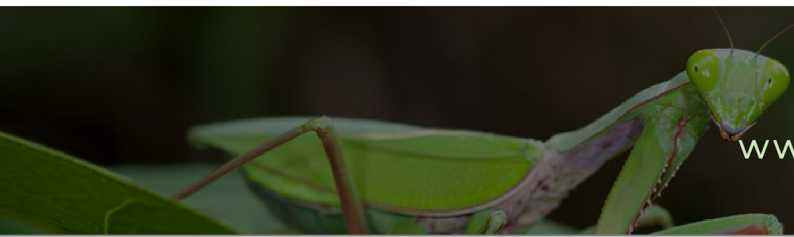


CARE GUIDE



GIANT RAINFOREST MANTID

Hierodula majuscula



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PROFILE

Giant Rainforest Mantids are one of Australia's largest praying mantids, growing up to around 70mm in body length with fairly robust bodies. They are found in the northern tropical regions of Australia, and feed upon large butterflies, dragonflies and a host of other invertebrate species.

Like other mantids this species lays its eggs encased within a foamy ootheca which sets hard soon after it is laid. The ootheca is usually attached to a branch or some other solid surface. The young hatch several months later, and begin feeding soon after emerging. They will tolerate each other for a short time, but once they disperse any chance meetings of the siblings will often result in one eating the other.

These mantids grow by shedding their outer skeleton (exoskeleton). This process is called ecdysis or moulting. To moult successfully they need to hang uninterrupted beneath a leaf or branch. This can take 10mins to half an hour. Maturity has been reached once the mantids have developed wings. Males and females can be identified as they get larger; males have 7 segments in the abdomen, and females have 6.

One incredible part of the life cycle of this species is the mating ritual. More often than not the female will consume the male during mating, and amazingly he will continue mating long after she has consumed his head, front legs and thorax. Since at this point the male's job is done, sacrificing himself for the sake of his offspring (his body providing nutrients to the female) is an advantage for the species.

FOOD

Live insects. Crickets are ideal (sold at most pet shops). Flies are also good. Cockroaches are suitable, but do hide. Feeding once or twice a week is usually sufficient – provided enough food is given to keep the mantids abdomen filled and rounded. Freshly dead insects can be used but must be fed to the mantid via forceps or tweezers, as they will not pick up dead insects off the ground.

WATER

Mist spray around your mantis each day – it will drink the droplets.

ENCLOSURE

The enclosure needs to be large enough to allow your mantid to shed its exoskeleton properly. An enclosure should be higher than it is wide, as mantids like to climb upwards. Minimum size requirements are 30cm high x 20cm wide x 20cm deep. Add branches, sticks or plants to the enclosure to give the mantis something to climb on. Place the enclosure in a spot where it gets a bit of daylight each day, but be careful it doesn't overheat in direct sunlight. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation in your enclosure. As praying mantids are predators, they need to be kept separately from each other.

SUBSTRATE

Not required, but it can help absorb excess water to put some paper down on the bottom of the enclosure. This will also catch the frass (poo) that falls to the ground. A thin layer of coco-peat or leaf litter can also be used.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove frass (poo) and discarded food material from the bottom of the enclosure once a week. Remove uneaten prey within 12 hours.

HANDLING

These insects can be handled, but care must be taken when picking them up. Occasionally adults may attempt to grab your fingers mistaking them as food. They should be picked up gently, by coaxing them onto your hand. They always prefer to climb up, so use this to your advantage when picking them up and putting them back into their enclosure. Females tend to be more easily handled than males; adult males can fly and are a little more nervous.

COMMON ISSUES

Occasional moulting issues. This may be because there isn't enough room in the enclosure for them to do so, or that their environment is too dry and their new exoskeleton hardens prematurely. Live food insects can also interrupt them during moulting, so remove uneaten insects.



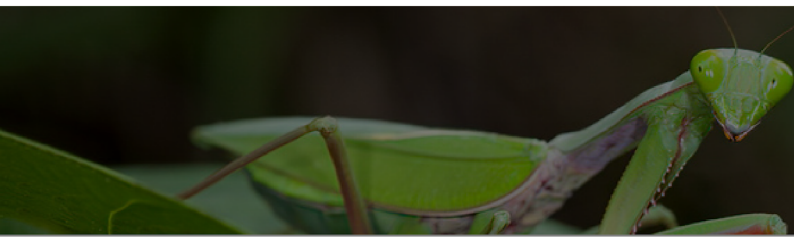
Around a year life span



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



60-80% humidity



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