Discus of all south american cichlids. they can

Environment

Discusin the wildThediscus is native to Brazil and lives in the Amazon river. It can befound in large shoals or groups of discus. Discus live among deadtrees and roots. The bottom of the river usually has a sandy bottom.

There are hardly any plants in their environment. They can be foundmostly with festivum cichlids. There is a cooperation between the twospecies with Discus inhabiting mid to lower depths and festivumsinhabit higher up in the water column. It is thought that the twospecies act as look outs for each other. Discusin nature often live in very large shoals. The discus is the mostsocial of all South American cichlids. They can be found in socialgroups of 100s of discus in their own enclave in the Amazon.

They arenot found in the shallows but in deeper water. However they avoidfast moving parts of the river but will cross past fast movingsections when travelling. Inthe wild Discus feed on mostly plants and algae and organisms livingon those algae and plants. Insect larvae, small crustaceans andvarious worms are also eaten when found.

The availability of the livefoods is seasonal. During the rainy season there is an abundance oflive food available that stimulates the discus to come into spawningcondition. In the dry season live food becomes scarce causing discusto seek out food in seasonal ponds and lakes where there is morechance to find food. Discusinhabit floodplains of the Amazon river. In the dry season these dryup and may become isolated from the river.

The floodplains areteeming with many species of fish and insects. Inthe wild the vast majority of discus spawning happens at the start ofthe rising water period. Most Amazonian fish, insects and othercreatures breed at this period

too. This results in an abundance offood for the growing discus fry after they have been weaned from theparents. Choosingand buying DiscusWhenbuying discus for the first time you must be careful who you buy fromand examine the fish by eye before buying. This may not always bepossible because a lot of good quality discus can be bought mailorder. The best you can do in that case is to ask to see pictures orvideos of the fish before buying. Forfirst time buyers it is best to buy a group of 6 or more young discusall at the same time from a single source.

The best buying size foryoungsters is between 2 and 4 inches long. At 2 inches the youngdiscus will have more chance to adapt to your aquarium conditions andof course will cost a lot less. And at this size they grow fastest. However, smaller discus are still developing and will change colourand shape as they grow. At 4 inches you will get a good idea of theadult colour and shape.

But, the discus will be more expensive atthis size and may have already adapted to the sellers tanks. Thebest source will be a breeder local to you where you can visit andsee his tanks of fish. You should make sure to ask him about thewater conditions such as ph, hardness, filtration, water changes andfoods for his discus. This will help your new discus to adjustquickly to their new environment when you take them home. Tryyour best to buy healthy discus from healthy tanks.

To do this lookfor any signs of illness. Don’t just examine the discus you arebuying but also look at tank-mates. If any of the fish in the tankavoid buying the discus because even if the fish you are looking atlook extremely

healthy, they have been exposed to disease orparasites from their tank-mates which may not show up in the healthydiscus until days or weeks later.

Theillness check list includes: Whiteor grey spots which is most likely ickGreyyellow spots or pathes which is most likely velvetFungalgrowth which may be white/grey fluffy patchesPitsaround the lateral line or near the head. This is hole in the headdisease. Dullcolours which may be a sign of internal parasites. Whiteor stringy faeces may be a sign of parasites or of poor diet. Clampedfins.

Healthy discus hold their fins out. Highbreath rate. Healthy discus have a relaxed breathing rate. Fishnot feeding.

Ask to see the fish feeding. Fishhiding away. Fishwith ragged fins.

Lookfor fish with bright red eyes. If the eyes are too big for its bodydo not but that discus because it is a badly cared for discus thathas not grown properly.-buybreeding pair or group of 6+ youngsters-Europeandiscus acclimatised to harder water than wild or AsianDiscusfish care guideThereare 3 secrets to keeping discus. The first is the use of soft water. The second is to provide very low levels of nitrates.

And the thirdis that the discus need vegetable matter in their diet. Discusare a shoaling cichlid and grow to a large size so you will need alarge tank to house a group of discus. Discus will not be comfortablein unless you have at least six discus. The aquarium needs to be 18inches deep. The aquarium will be heavy because of the larger weightof water so you will need to buy a stronger stand or cabinet thannormal. Make sure the base is level by using a

spirit level. Place alayer of polystyrene foam on top of the stand to even out anypressure spots.

FiltrationReverseosmosis is a form of filtration that removes a lot of hardness fromtap water. Unless you have soft water from your tap then reverseosmosis is compulsory for discus fish. Filtrationis the same for all fish species, but discus are more sensitive tofish waste because they are from the river Amazon. In the wild theriver Amazon washes away a lot of fish waste. This process isreplicated in the aquarium by frequent water changes. In the aquariumfish waste decomposes releasing harmful ammonia. Ammonia is harmfulto fish. Luckily there are bacteria that will digest this and turn itinto nitrate which is less toxic.

The nitrate is diluted by the waterchanges. Plants soak up nitrate as fertiliser, but in the aquarium, plants usually don’t soak up enough nitrate. That is why waterchanges are necessary.

Professionaldiscus breeders use filters that turn over the volume at the rate of10 times per hour. In other words, for a 100 liter tank they employfilters running ar 1000 litres per hour. Biologicalfiltration is the most important part of filtration. In a discusaquarium it is best to employ mechanical filtration that will removemost solids from the water.

This will allow the biological filtrationto just have the job of breaking down the fish waste without gettingclogged up with gunk. A pair of sponge filters in a discus aquariumis a good choice for biological filtration. You can do mechanicalfiltration by having an external canister filter or a hang on

theback filter. Professionaldiscus breeders sometimes use a smaller external tank (a refugium)that can perform biological filtration.

In these tanks algae or fastgrowing plants(such as Java moss or wisteria) can be kept to removethe nitrates. Bright lights are used 24 hours a day to encourage fastplant growth that soak up all the excess nitrate. In theory this canremove the need for water changes. Discusare sensitive to high dissolved solids in the water. Reverse osmosismay not remove all harmful substances such as heavy metals.

In thatcase activated carbon which can be used inside the mechanical filteras an extra layer will remove those trace substances. Often a changeof behaviour can be noticed in the discus after carbon filtration. Skittish behaviour stops and the discus become more relaxed. Substrateand plants in a discus aquariumSubstrate+ plantsdiscus