



American Green Tree Frogs

Hyla cinerea

BEGINNER · 1.5–2.5 IN ADULT · 5–7 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · ARBOREAL · SOUTHEASTERN US

The frog on the porch light. American green tree frogs are the glossy little natives of the Southeast, the same species that sings from rain gutters and windowsills all summer. They're among the most forgiving first amphibians in the hobby. Know two things going in: they're watch-and-listen pets, not handling pets, and a calling male is loud enough to share a wall with.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	1.5–2.5 in
Lifespan	5–7 years
Ambient temp	72–80 °F day / 65–72 °F night
Basking spot	80–84 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Low-level beneficial
Diet	Crickets, flies, moths
Feeding cadence	Every 2–3 days



The porcelain-green voice of the American Southeast. Captive-bred froglets turn up on NARBC show tables every season.

Photo: Brian Gratwicke / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

A Frog to Watch, Not Hold

Green tree frogs have permeable skin that absorbs whatever it touches, so handling is for necessity (moving a frog during a cage clean), never for fun. When you must, use wet, clean, unscented hands or gently cup the frog. What they lack as a hands-on pet they repay in personality: bold little hunters that station themselves on glass and leaves at dusk. Males call, loudly and often. Charming in a living room, less so through a bedroom wall.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Build up, not out: this is a strictly arboreal frog, and climbing height beats floor space at every stage. An adult lives well in an 18×18×24 vertical terrarium; froglets start in smaller quarters where food is easy to find. Unusually for the hobby, green tree frogs cohabit well. Match sizes, though, since a frog will try anything that fits in its mouth, and give a group more room than the single-frog minimum. Furnish tall with branches, cork and sturdy plants, and keep the lid tight.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Froglet	10×10×12	12×12×18	Start tiny: fruit flies and pinhead crickets.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×18	Hardy native species; prioritize height over footprint.
Subadult	18×18×18	18×18×24	Group-compatible at matched sizes.
Adult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Often wild-caught. Seek out captive-bred animals.

Enclosure minimums and preferred sizes follow Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; height matters more than footprint at every stage.

03

Heat, Light & UVB

Days run 72–80 °F ambient with a gentle basking spot of 80–84 °F up in the branches; nights can fall to 65–72 °F, and this native species takes the swing in stride. In a warm room you may need little more than a low-wattage bulb on a thermostat. Measure before you heat. Low-level UVB is beneficial rather than mandatory, and it's cheap insurance: a low-output tube over the screen top, run on a regular day-night cycle, supports bone health.

04

Humidity & Safe Water

Hold humidity at 50–70% with daily misting and good airflow: stagnant damp air breeds infection faster than dry air does. Keep a shallow water bowl the frog can sit in, refreshed every day. **Every drop that touches this frog must be dechlorinated. Chlorine and chloramine kill amphibians.** Treat tap water with conditioner or use spring water, and never let soap, cleaning sprays or hand sanitizer near the enclosure; permeable skin absorbs it all.

05

Substrate & Planting

Coco fiber topped with sphagnum moss or leaf litter holds moisture without going swampy; skip gravel and anything fertilized or pesticide-treated, because whatever sits in the substrate ends up against permeable skin. Structure is the real enrichment for an arboreal hunter: cork rounds, angled branches and broad-leaved plants at several heights. Big smooth leaves double as day roosts, where you'll find your frog folded flat and asleep, waiting for dusk.

06

Feeding

Green tree frogs are insect specialists. Crickets are the staple, with flies and moths for variety. Feed every 2–3 days, as much as the frog clears in one sitting, and do it near lights-out: this is a night hunter, and food that wanders past at dusk gets noticed. Froglets start on fruit flies and pinhead crickets. Gut-load your feeders and dust them with calcium and vitamins; an insect-only diet needs the supplements to be complete.

07

Health Red Flags

A green tree frog talks with its skin. A bright frog gone muddy brown for days, not hours, is telling you it's too cold, stressed or sick. Take seriously a frog that sits in the water bowl around the clock, refuses food for a week, looks bloated, or shows the belly and thigh reddening of red-leg, a fast-moving bacterial infection. Any of these means an amphibian-experienced vet this week; frogs hide illness until late.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.