



Arboreal Alligator Lizards

Abronia spp.

ADVANCED • 6–8 IN ADULT • DIURNAL • CLOUD FOREST • MEXICO & GUATEMALA

Abronia are the cloud-forest dragons: small, emerald, prehensile-tailed lizards from the misty pine-oak canopy of Mexico and Guatemala. They are an advanced keep with rules that invert desert-reptile instincts. Cool, not warm; wet air, not dry. Buy only captive-bred animals from reputable breeders (the genus is CITES-protected), and expect a live-bearing species that rewards precision.

AT A GLANCE

Ambient (day)	65–75 °F
Basking surface	78–82 °F
Night	55–65 °F
Humidity	60–80% • misted 2×/day
UVB	Required
Diet	Small insects, dusted
Feeding cadence	Young daily; adults 3–4×/wk
Adult size	6–8 in
Representative	<i>Abronia graminea</i>



Abronia graminea, a cool, wet canopy specialist. Captive-bred animals only.

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01

A specialist, honestly labeled

Abronia are secretive, deliberate lizards that live vertically and gauge everything by cover. They are not handling animals; keep contact brief and gentle, and never grab at the prehensile tail they anchor with. House every animal alone: this genus is famously intolerant of cage-mates, and siblings will maul each other.

02

Housing: air is the architecture

Screen enclosures, or glass with major ventilation modification (many keepers add a quiet computer fan), are the difference between success and failure. Stagnant humid air kills *Abronia*. Build tall with cork tubes, branch networks and epiphytes, keeping a shaded, extra-humid core the lizard can retreat into.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Newborn	12×12×18	16×16×20	Live-born. Rear separately: even siblings attack.
Juvenile	16×16×20	18×18×24	Screen sides or strong airflow; dense planting.
Adult	18×18×24	24×18×36	One lizard per cage, tall and heavily planted.
Pairing	N/A	Introductions only	Bring pairs together briefly for breeding, then separate.

Sizes in inches, L×W×H. Habitat-OS species profile + keeper practice (life-stage dataset pending).

03

Think mountain temperatures, not jungle

The band is cool: 65–75 °F ambient with at most a small, focused 78–82 °F basking spot, and nights dropping into the 50s and low 60s. That drop is healthy, not dangerous. Overheating is lethal and fast in a closed glass box; above the low 80s ambient, this species is in trouble. Most homes need no heat at all, and summer cooling matters more than winter warmth.

04

Water: the #1 killer is dehydration

Abronia drink droplets off leaves in fog, and mostly ignore bowls. Mist thoroughly for several minutes morning and late afternoon (every day, no exceptions), so foliage drips. Dehydration is the most common cause of death in captive Abronia; sunken eyes and wrinkled flanks are late-stage warnings, not early ones.

05

Planting & light

A moisture-holding soil base under cypress and sphagnum, live pothos and bromeliads, and layered perches from floor to canopy. Provide moderate UVB over screen for this diurnal species, filtered through partial plant cover so the lizard chooses its exposure. Keep light cycles at 12 hours.

06

Feeding

Small prey, unhurried predator: appropriately sized crickets, small roaches and the occasional waxworm, dusted with calcium. Feed young animals daily or every other day and adults three to four times a week. Wild Abronia eat spiders and soft inverts, so variety in feeder species is worth real effort.

07

Health Red Flags

Dehydration first, always: wrinkled skin, sunken eyes, lethargy. Increase misting immediately and involve a reptile vet. Gaping and panting mean overheating; move the animal somewhere cool now. Bite wounds mean a cohabitation experiment that must end today. And any wild-caught, cheap 'deal' on an Abronia carries parasites and a poor prognosis; captive-bred is the only responsible buy.

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.