



Day Geckos

Phelsuma spp.

INTERMEDIATE · 9–11 IN ADULT · 10–15 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · MADAGASCAR

Day geckos are living jewelry: neon green, sun-loving, and in constant motion through a planted vertical world. The giant day gecko of Madagascar is the flagship (nearly a foot of emerald with red pinstripes), and this sheet runs on its numbers. Plan for a spectacular display animal you watch like a fish tank, not a pet you hold.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient (day)	75–82 °F
Basking surface	85–90 °F
Night	70–75 °F
Humidity	60–80%
UVB	Required: 12% T5 at 10–13 in
Diet	Insects, fruit & CGD
Feeding cadence	Daily
Adult size	9–11 in
Representative	Giant day gecko



Giant day gecko, the emerald standard of the genus and the animal behind these numbers.

Photo: Marius Burger / iNaturalist · CC0

01

A display animal, not a hand pet

Here is the deal you make with a day gecko: you get one of the most beautiful vertebrates in the hobby, and in exchange you keep your hands out of the enclosure. Their skin is engineered to tear away from predators. A grab that a leopard gecko would shrug off strips patches from a *Phelsuma*. They grow bold in a calm room and will hunt from your presence within weeks.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Build tall and plant it: vertical bamboo, broad-leaf plants, cork flats. Glass terrariums with screen tops work well, but day geckos climb glass effortlessly, so every service opening needs discipline. One gecko per enclosure; males defend territory seriously, and even pairs need watching.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	8×8×12	12×12×18	UVB from day one; skin tears, so never grab.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×24	Live plants and dense bamboo structure.
Subadult	18×18×24	24×18×36	Males are territorial; house singly.
Adult	18×18×36	24×24×36	Tall, planted, T5-lit. A vivarium, not a cage.

Enclosure sizes in inches, L×W×H: Habitat-OS life-stage guidance (giant day gecko).

03

Heat & Light

Diurnal means light-driven: a focused basking spot of 85–90 °F at a top perch, ambient in the high 70s. Critically, the rest of the enclosure must stay cooler than the basking zone so the gecko can bail out. UVB is required: a 12% T5 HO tube on a 12-hour cycle, resting on the mesh 10 to 13 in above the top perch, which puts basking UVI near 3. Glass blocks UVB completely and the mesh itself cuts a quarter to a half, so never drop a tube under 10 in. Nights fall to 70–75 °F, lights fully off.

04

Humidity & Water

Target 60–80% with a morning and evening misting; the geckos drink the droplets off leaves. Ventilation is the counterweight: saturated, stagnant air molds a vivarium fast. Live plants plus a drainage layer hold the cycle steady, and a small dish adds insurance.

05

Planting & perches

A soil or peat base under cypress mulch, pothos and sansevieria for cover, and vertical bamboo the diameter of the gecko's body for highways. Day geckos live on vertical surfaces; horizontal floor space is nearly irrelevant to them. Position perches at multiple distances from the basking lamp so the whole gradient is usable.

06

Feeding

A daily rotation: crickets and small roaches as the base, fruit-nectar or CGD-style mixes twice a week from a cup ledge. Gut-load every feeder. Dust the insects at most feedings with plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus, because working UVB lets the gecko build its own. Then run a D3 multivitamin weekly for growing geckos, twice monthly for adults, and keep it the only D3 in the rotation. Day geckos burn through minerals fast, and metabolic bone disease is the classic outcome of skipping it.

07

Health Red Flags

Torn or missing skin patches mean handling or a predator scare. They heal, but fix the cause. A gecko basking constantly with washed-out color is usually too cold or under-lit; check bulbs. Soft jaw, kinked tail, or trembling limbs signal MBD from missed supplementation. Sunken eyes and wrinkled skin mean dehydration: mist more, and check the drainage isn't wicking the enclosure dry.

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.