



Green Anoles

Anolis carolinensis

BEGINNER · 5-8 IN ADULT · 4-8 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · DISPLAY ANIMAL · SOUTHEASTERN US

The little green lizard of the American South is the one doing push-ups on porch rails from the Carolinas to Texas. Green anoles are quick, alert, and endlessly watchable, shifting from leaf-green to brown with mood and temperature. The honest headline: this is a display animal, not a hands-on pet, and the old pet-store shoebox sells it short. Give it a tall, planted, sunlit-feeling world and it thrives.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner (display animal)
Adult size	5-8 inches
Lifespan	4-8 years
Ambient temp	75-85 °F
Basking spot	88-92 °F
Night temp	68-74 °F
Humidity	60-80%
UVB	5.0 UVB, 10-12 in over screen
Diet	Insects, every 1-2 days



Quick, sharp-eyed, and built for climbing, the green anole is the American South's porch-rail lizard. Look for captive-bred animals at NARBC shows.

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01

Watch, Don't Handle

Anoles are quick, sharp-eyed, and skittish, and no amount of gentle habit-building turns them into a lap lizard. Grabbing one usually means a dropped tail or a dash for the nearest gap. Treat this species as a display animal, a busy and dramatic one; males flash a pink dewlap and do push-up displays all day. Kept behind glass in a planted enclosure, they show you far more natural behavior than any hand-tame gecko will.

02

Housing: Think Vertical

Anoles live vertically, up tree trunks, fence posts, and shrubs. Height beats floor space at every age. A hatchling starts in an 8×8×12 and moves up fast; a single adult does well in an 18×18×24 and better in a 24×18×36. Racks and low tubs are a no for this species: they need light from above and room to climb. One male per enclosure, always, since two will fight until one loses.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	8×8×12	12×12×18	Tiny at hatch; fruit flies are the primary food.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×24	UVB from the start; plant heavily for climbing and cover.
Subadult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Males are territorial: one male per enclosure, no exceptions.
Adult	18×18×24	24×18×36	Bioactive planted setups are ideal; seek out captive-bred animals.

Enclosure sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance (all vertical builds); height matters more than floor space.

03

Heat, Light, and UVB

Run the enclosure at 75–85 °F by day with an 88–92 °F basking spot, and let it fall to 68–74 °F at night. Heat comes from above (a small basking bulb), never a heat rock. And hear this clearly: **UVB is not optional for this species**. Sit a 5.0 T5 HO tube on top of the screen and set the basking branch 10 to 12 inches below it, which puts the anole near UVI 2. Mesh cuts UVB by a quarter to a half, and glass blocks it outright. Replace the tube on schedule.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 60–80%, the swamp-and-coastal-plain air this species evolved in. Mist well morning and evening; live plants and a partly covered screen top make the range easy to hold. Here's the part old care sheets miss: most anoles ignore a water dish and drink droplets off leaves after misting, so the spray is their water supply, not just their humidity. A cheap hygrometer beats guessing.

05

Substrate and Planting

This is the species bioactive setups were made for. A few inches of moist soil-based substrate under leaf litter, live pothos and other broad-leaved plants, and branches running floor to ceiling give an anole everything it uses in the wild: climbing routes, drinking surfaces, and cover. Heavy planting isn't decoration. A bare tank keeps a skittish lizard permanently stressed. Skip it and you'll own a brown, hiding anole; plant it and you'll own a green one.

06

Feeding

Green anoles are insect hunters. Small, frequent meals suit a fast metabolism, so offer appropriately sized crickets and dubia roaches as staples, with waxworms as an occasional treat, and feed every 1–2 days. Hatchlings are tiny enough that fruit flies are the primary food. Gut-load feeders, dust them with plain calcium (no D3, no phosphorus) at most feedings, and add a multivitamin weekly for young anoles, twice monthly for adults. Prey should be no bigger than the space between the eyes.

07

Health Red Flags

An anole that stays brown for days, hides constantly, or sits on the floor is telling you something's wrong. Usually it's temperature, stress, or illness. Sunken eyes and wrinkled skin mean dehydration; mist more and check your hygrometer. The serious one is metabolic bone disease from missing UVB or calcium: rubbery jaw, trembling limbs, kinked tail. Those signs mean a reptile vet now; MBD can be arrested early, but bone damage doesn't undo itself.

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.