



Mediterranean House Geckos

Hemidactylus turcicus

BEGINNER · 4-5 IN ADULT · 5-10 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · MEDITERRANEAN & MIDDLE EAST

The gecko on the porch light. Mediterranean house geckos are small, nocturnal and about as forgiving as a lizard gets, which is why they survive a lot of beginner mistakes. The honest headline is what they are outside the glass: an introduced species established across the southern US. An animal that comes into your care never goes back out. Never release one.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	4-5 inches
Lifespan	5-10 years
Ambient temp	75-85 °F
Basking spot	85-90 °F
Night drop	68-72 °F
Humidity	40-60 %
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet & feeding	Insects, every 1-2 days



Captive-bred Mediterranean house geckos turn up on NARBC tables at most shows: palm-sized, lidless-eyed, and a genuine beginner's gecko.
Photo: [redacted] / Wikimedia Commons · CC BY-SA 4.0

01

Watch, Don't Handle

Be honest about what this is: a display animal. Mediterranean house geckos are quick, nocturnal, and completely uninterested in your hands. Chase one and you will probably end up holding a dropped tail, which regrows short and dull. Hands-off is the standing rule at every age, and hatchlings are the most breakable of the lot. Handling means moving or examining an animal, never entertainment. Cup them, don't grab. What you get back is a lizard that hunts the glass all evening while you watch.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Height first, at every stage. Hatchlings start at 6×6×12, with 8×8×12 preferred. Juveniles want 8×8×12 minimum and grow into a 12×12×18, the adult floor too; 18×18×24 is the better adult home. Racks are a conditional yes at best; they cost the gecko its climbing height. Lids matter more than looks: **an escaped house gecko in the southern US is a released one, and this species is already established there.** Males fight, and in a box this size the loser has nowhere to go, so house singly.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	6×6×12	8×8×12	Vertical from day one; a touch more cold-tolerant than most house geckos.
Juvenile	8×8×12	12×12×18	Hardy and adaptable, but climbing room beats floor space at every size.
Subadult	12×12×18	12×12×18	Naturalized across the southern US, so buy captive-bred rather than collect.
Adult	12×12×18	18×18×24	4-5 inches and hands-off: a display gecko, not a handling one.

Enclosure sizes in inches, width × depth × height, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Height is the priority at every stage.

03

Heat, Light and the Night Drop

Give a gradient: 75–85 °F ambient, a warm spot at 85–90 °F, and nights allowed to fall to 68–72 °F. A low-wattage overhead source on a thermostat does the job. Heat rocks never belong in a gecko enclosure, whatever the shop shelf says. This species tolerates a wider range than most house geckos, which is not a license to skip the thermometer. Low-output UVB is beneficial rather than mandatory, and a nocturnal gecko still uses it. Put the bulb on a timer and replace it on schedule.

04

Humidity & Water

Aim for 40–60 % humidity, which in most homes means a light misting in the evening rather than a fogger running all day. Mediterranean scrubland and rocky coasts are the reference: dry air, damp hiding places. Give one humid retreat, a cork tube or a small tub of damp moss, and the shed takes care of itself. Most of what a house gecko drinks comes off leaves and glass as droplets, so mist the furniture. Keep a shallow dish as well, and change it daily.

05

Substrate & Furnishing

Vertical clutter is the enrichment. Stack cork flats against the back wall, add a few branches and a plant or two, and give the gecko a dozen places to wedge itself flat during the day. For substrate, a coir and topsoil mix holds a little moisture and plants well. Skip loose sand at any age; a gecko this small takes it in with its prey, and impaction follows. Paper towel is the honest choice for hatchlings. Cover the back and sides so the animal can always be unseen.

06

Feeding and Supplements

Small insects, often. Feed every 1–2 days: crickets, fruit flies and the moths this species chases around porch lights in the wild. Nothing wider than the gecko's head, which for a 4–5 inch adult means small feeders. Dust with calcium and a multivitamin on a regular schedule, and gut-load the insects before they go in; a cricket is only as good as its last meal. Feed after dark, when the animal is actually awake, and pull uneaten crickets out overnight.

07

Health Red Flags

Watch the toes. Stuck shed rings a toe, cuts off its blood supply, and the toe drops; a gecko this small can lose several before you notice. Then the skeleton: a rubbery jaw, trembling legs, or a belly that never lifts off the ground means calcium is failing. Sunken eyes and loose skin mean dehydration. An animal that should eat every 1–2 days and instead goes a full week without food, or thins at the tail base, needs a reptile vet.

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.