

# Day Gecko (*Phelsuma* species)

## Introduction to Day Geckos

Day Geckos (and most of the other small diurnal geckos) were imported in some numbers in the 1980s and early 1990s when Madagascar was exporting large numbers of herps. Luckily, there has been a dedicated group of gecko breeders who have specialized in these beautiful lizards since these early days and captive-hatched specimens are available at larger reptile shows, pet stores, and on-line.

Day Geckos range in size from the smallest species, *P. dubia* and *P. klemmeri* at 2-3" to larger specimens of *P. m. grandis* and *P. standingi* that can reach an overall length of 6" - 8" as adults. Most *Phelsuma* species have beautiful green bodies with red, blue, black or yellow markings but some species, such as *P. mutabilis* and *P. breviceps* are more drab.

## Enclosure

Day Geckos typically require vertically oriented enclosures. A ten-gallon tall terrarium will be ideal for a single adult day gecko. With the addition of branches and leafy live plants, a keeper can successfully keep and breed a pair of smaller geckos in this ten-gallon vivarium. Of course a secure screen top will be required as these geckos can climb up the sides of the glass enclosure.

In a naturalistic vivarium, substrate should consist of a 1" - 2" layer of 3/4 peat moss and 1/4 sand mixture with a top covering of cypress mulch to help hold in the needed moisture.

Some keepers, especially those with large gecko collections, keep their Day Geckos on a substrate of paper towel. It is easy to clean, inexpensive, and allows a keeper to closely monitor the enclosure for cleanliness, fecal material, etc. Care must be taken that the moisture remains correct and paper towel is fairly unforgiving where the natural substrate tends to retain moisture better.

The ideal temperature range for most species is an overall temperature of 75°-78° F with a small, focused hot spot of (90° to 92° F) which the gecko will use for basking. It is very important that the entire enclosure doesn't reach this hot temperature. A nighttime drop into the 70s and even mid- to high 60s is okay for most species.

A water dish should be added and the enclosure should be misted once or twice a week to keep the environment reminiscent of their tropical forest home.

## Feeding Day Geckos

Day Geckos will need to be fed a combination of insect prey and prepared fruit diets. We feed our Day Geckos small crickets twice a week. We add a small soft (freshly molted) mealworm or one small waxworm every other week.

Once a week to every ten days, we offer our Day Geckos a small meal of fruit baby food or one of the excellent commercial diets that are available for geckos. This can be offered on a small soft drink lid or other small, shallow dish. The fruit baby food (mango, peach, banana or tropical fruit mix are the favorites) is mixed with a pinch of calcium powder and a small pinch of high quality reptile vitamin powder. The mixture is combined well. This mix gives the geckos some variety to their diet and gives them a dose of the vitamins and minerals they are missing from being raised indoors.

\* If a keeper does not offer his or her Day Geckos this mix of vitamins and minerals the geckos are certain to undergo life-threatening changes including Metabolic Bone Disease, rickets, and other maladies.

## Watering Day Geckos

Your day gecko should always have access to fresh, clean water. Most keepers use purified water for all of their geckos. A shallow water dish works well. In addition, a keeper can add a small drip system to the enclosure or can spray the enclosure with purified water once or twice a week. The gecko will lick the water drops from off of the decorations or sides of the enclosure.



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