



Oriental Fire-Bellied Toads

Bombina orientalis

BEGINNER · 1.5–2 IN ADULT · 10–15 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · SEMI-AQUATIC · TOXIC SKIN

A little green-and-black toad with a fire-alarm belly, and one of the few amphibians that keeps daytime hours. Fire-bellies are bold, hardy, and endlessly busy in a half-land, half-water setup, which makes them one of the best beginner amphibians there is. The honest part: their skin carries a mild toxin, so this is a watch-me animal, not a hold-me animal. Plan on a planted paludarium and a front-row seat.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	1.5–2 inches
Lifespan	10–15 years
Ambient temp	68–78 °F day
Basking spot	75–80 °F
Night temp	60–68 °F
Humidity	60–80%
UVB	Low level beneficial
Feeding	Insects every 2–3 days



The namesake belly: a red-and-black warning label the toad flashes when threatened. Captive-bred fire-bellies are a staple at NARBC shows.
Photo: Kim, Hyun-tae / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Look, Don't Touch

Fire-bellies are the rare amphibian with stage presence: day-active, bold, and quick to paddle over when the lid opens. They are not for holding. The skin secretes a mild toxin that can sting eyes and mouths, and their permeable skin absorbs whatever's on yours. Handle only when you must, with wet, clean, chemical-free hands or a soft net, and wash up afterward. Kids can be great fire-belly keepers as watchers, not handlers.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Think pond shoreline, not forest floor. Every stage lives in a horizontal paludarium split roughly half land, half shallow water, with easy ramps between the two. Adults need a 36×18×18 at minimum; a 48×18×18 runs a group of five or six, and a group is genuinely more fun to watch. Two rules: fire-bellies only, and a tight lid. Their toxins make them unsafe roommates for other amphibians, and wet toads climb glass better than you'd think.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Toadlet	12×10×10	18×12×12	Paludarium with land and water from the start; tiny at metamorphosis.
Juvenile	18×12×12	24×12×12	Hardy and active at this size; groups do well.
Subadult	24×12×12	36×18×18	Skin secretions are mildly toxic; wash hands after any tank work.
Adult	36×18×18	48×18×18	50/50 land–water paludarium; groups of 5–6 fine, no other amphibian species.

Enclosure minimums and preferred footprints from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Horizontal floor space matters more than height at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Most homes keep a fire-belly tank in range with no heater at all: 68–78 °F ambient by day, a gentle 75–80 °F warm corner if you want one, and a drop to 60–68 °F at night that they take in stride. Heat is the thing to fear, not the thing to chase. Sustained temps much past 80 °F stress them fast. Low-output UVB is beneficial for a planted, day-active display; run lights on a steady day-night cycle.

04

Water First

The pond half does most of your humidity work: 60–80% comes almost free with that much open water. The water itself is the serious part. **Every drop that enters the tank must be dechlorinated**; chlorine and chloramine go straight through amphibian skin. Use a conditioner that neutralizes both, change part of the water often since the toads foul it, and keep soaps, sprays, and hand sanitizer far from the enclosure.

05

Land, Plants & Cover

Build the land side from washed river stones too large to swallow, or a soil base capped with sheet moss; lunging feeders gulp small gravel, and impaction follows. Live plants earn their keep here: pothos and other sturdy greens filter the water, soften the light, and give shy toads cover. Add cork rafts or floating plants so everyone can loaf at the surface. A planted tank keeps itself half-clean and keeps the toads busy.

06

Feeding

Fire-bellies are motion-triggered insect eaters, taking crickets, small worms, and flies every 2–3 days. Keep prey small; a toad this size wants bugs shorter than the width of its head. Dust feeders with calcium and a vitamin supplement on a regular rotation, and feed on the land side or at the waterline where you can watch the strike. If food doesn't move, they won't recognize it. Skip freeze-dried and go live.

07

Health Red Flags

Healthy fire-bellies are greedy and buoyant, so trust behavior first: refusing food, hiding all day, or floating listless instead of paddling. Watch the body for bloating, cloudy or constantly shedding skin, fuzzy patches, and reddening or sores on legs and underside beyond the belly's normal fire (classic early sepsis). Most trouble starts in the water, so change it the same day, and get any toad with skin signs to an amphibian-savvy exotics vet fast.

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.