



Gray Tree Frogs

Hyla versicolor

BEGINNER · 1.5–2.5 IN ADULT · 5–10 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

A backyard native with a party trick: gray tree frogs shift from bark-gray to leaf-green depending on temperature and surroundings. Small, hardy, and genuinely beginner-friendly, they're one of the easiest ways into amphibians. Two honest warnings up front: this is a watch-don't-hold pet, and males sing. That rolling trill is charming at dusk and less charming at two in the morning, so pick the room accordingly.

AT A GLANCE

Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	1.5–2.5 inches
Lifespan	5–10 years
Daytime ambient	68–78 °F
Basking spot	78–82 °F
Night drop	55–65 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Low level, beneficial
Feeding	Insects every 2–3 days



Bark-gray one day, leaf-green the next. Same frog. Captive-bred grays are a staple of the amphibian tables at NARBC shows.

Photo: Blake Ross / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Look, Don't Touch

Gray tree frogs are calm, bold little climbers that adjust quickly to captive life, and they're one of the best display amphibians in the hobby. They are not a hands-on pet. Amphibian skin is permeable: oils, soap residue, and lotion on your hands go straight in. Handle only when you must, briefly, with wet, freshly rinsed hands. Males trill loudly on spring and summer nights. Two lookalike species share the name; their care is identical.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Height is everything for an arboreal frog. Build up, not out: a vertically oriented glass terrarium with a secure screen top and cross-ventilation, furnished floor to ceiling with branches and foliage. A single adult lives comfortably in an 18×18×24; a froglet starts in something far smaller so it can actually find its food. These frogs are escape artists with sticky toe pads. Any gap a fingertip fits through is a door.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Froglet	10×10×12	12×12×18	Fruit flies as the first food.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×18	Cold-tolerant; handles seasonal room variation.
Subadult	18×18×18	18×18×24	Shifts between gray and green to match its perch.
Adult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Survives freezing in the wild; a hardy, forgiving captive.

Enclosure sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Vertical space beats floor space at every age; this frog lives on the walls and ceiling.

03

Heat & Light

Most homes already sit in this frog's 68–78 °F daytime range, so heating is a light touch, not a project. A low-wattage bulb over one high perch creates the 78–82 °F basking spot. Anything stronger cooks a small enclosure. Let nights fall to 55–65 °F; this species is built for cool temperate nights, and the dip does it good. Low-level UVB isn't mandatory, but it is beneficial. Run it on a consistent day-night cycle and turn everything off after dark.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 50–70%, misting lightly when it dips, and keep real airflow moving. This is a woodland frog, not a rainforest one, and a soggy, stagnant tank breeds infection. A shallow water dish stays in the enclosure at all times. The rule that outranks everything else on this sheet: **every drop of water this frog touches must be dechlorinated.** Chlorine and chloramine go straight through amphibian skin. Treat tap water with an aquarium conditioner, every time, no exceptions.

05

Substrate & Planting

Coco fiber or a soil mix topped with leaf litter holds humidity and handles waste; skip gravel, which traps uneaten insects and grime. Furnish the vertical column: cork bark flats, angled branches, and broad-leaved plants (live pothos or sturdy fakes) so the frog can perch, hide, and pick its own microclimate. One amphibian-specific rule for cleaning day: no soaps, disinfectant sprays, or scented products anywhere near the enclosure. Hot water and elbow grease are the whole toolkit.

06

Feeding

An enthusiastic insectivore. Adults eat every 2–3 days: gut-loaded crickets as the staple, with moths and flies for variety and to trigger that arboreal hunting instinct. Keep prey smaller than the width of the frog's head, dust feeders with calcium and a vitamin supplement, and offer food at dusk when the frog is actually awake. These frogs will eat past full; a gray tree frog shaped like a water balloon isn't thriving, it's overfed. Adjust portions, not the schedule.

07

Health Red Flags

Grounded is the amphibian version of a limp. A tree frog that sits on the floor day after day is telling you something's wrong. Just as serious: refused food, weight loss, red patches on the belly or thighs, cloudy eyes, or color gone dull and staying dull no matter the background. Red-leg and other skin infections move fast in amphibians. Recheck your water treatment, then get the frog to an amphibian-savvy exotics vet within days, not weeks.

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.