



Green Iguanas

Iguana iguana

ADVANCED · 4–6 FT ADULT · STRICT HERBIVORE · DIURNAL CLIMBER · CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

No lizard is bought more optimistically than the green iguana. That alert hatchling grows into a spectacular, intelligent, sometimes opinionated giant. A strict herbivore from the treetops, it needs room-sized housing, serious UVB and a keeper who reads body language. Most iguanas outgrow their welcome and land in rescue. This sheet exists so yours doesn't: an advanced commitment, and an immensely rewarding one done right.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Advanced
Adult size	4–6 ft, tail included
Diet	Herbivore: greens, veg, flowers
Feeding cadence	Fresh salad daily
Ambient temp	80–88 °F daytime
Night temp	72–78 °F
Basking spot	95–100 °F
UVB	10.0 T5 HO (non-negotiable)
Humidity	65–80%



Young iguanas charm every NARBC aisle; the 5–6 ft adults are why this sheet exists. Buy one only if you can house the dinosaur it becomes.

Photo: Thomaz de Carvalho Callado / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

The Honest Conversation

Green iguanas are smart, observant and genuinely tameable. A patiently socialized animal can become a calm companion. They are also large, strong and seasonal: mature males especially can turn territorial and aggressive in breeding season, and a whipping tail and sharp claws demand respect. This is not a beginner species, and it isn't intermediate either; most green iguanas end up in rescue when reality outgrows the plan. Decide with your eyes open.

02

Housing: Plan for the Adult

Iguanas are climbers, so height matters as much as floor space; every stage calls for a vertical build. Read the table as a budget conversation: a hatchling cage lasts a year at best, because juveniles can double in size in that first year. An adult needs 96×48×72 at absolute minimum, and the honest preferred answer is a custom build or a dedicated reptile room. Racks have no place at any stage, and no off-the-shelf vivarium stays big enough for long.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	24×18×36	36×18×48	Nervous; give heavy climbing structure and plenty of visual cover.
Juvenile	48×24×48	60×30×60	Growth is rapid: many double in size within their first year.
Subadult	72×36×72	96×48×96	Where most keepers underestimate the adult housing still to come.
Adult	96×48×72	Custom room	5–6 ft including tail; plan a room-sized enclosure or reptile room.

Enclosure minimums and preferred builds from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Vertical orientation is the priority at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Run a daytime ambient of 80–88 °F with a basking surface at 95–100 °F, and let nights fall to 72–78 °F. Scale the basking zone to the whole animal: a lamp array that warms a six-foot lizard evenly beats one hot spot on a shoulder. On lighting there is no compromise: **high-output UVB is life support for this species**. Mount a 10.0 T5 HO tube over the screen with the basking perch 12–18 inches below it, metered near UVI 3–4, and replace tubes on schedule rather than when they die.

04

Humidity & Water

Target 65–80% humidity: tropical, but ventilated. In most homes that means daily misting, moisture-holding decor and a real hygrometer instead of a guess. Give a water tub big enough for a full soak; many iguanas drink, bathe and defecate in it, so it gets dumped and disinfected often, not topped off. Chronic dryness shows up first as stuck, flaky shed on the spikes and toes. Treat that as a humidity report card.

05

Furnishing the Climb

Substrate is the least of an iguana's furniture. Cypress mulch or coco fiber hold humidity well, and bare washable flooring is defensible in big builds where hygiene rules. Spend the effort overhead instead: thick angled branches rated for its weight, shelves at several heights, a basking platform under the lamps, and foliage for visual cover. Nervous hatchlings settle faster with places to hide. Rearrange now and then; a new climbing route is enrichment.

06

Feeding

Green iguanas are strict herbivores: leafy greens, vegetables and edible flowers, served fresh daily. Build each salad on calcium-rich staples like collard, mustard and turnip greens, rotate vegetables, and treat flowers such as hibiscus as the garnish they love. Dust with calcium on your vet's schedule. Animal protein never goes in the bowl. No insects, no dog food, no eggs. An iguana's kidneys pay for every serving, and the bill arrives years later.

07

Health Red Flags

Metabolic bone disease announces itself early: a softening or shortening jaw, swollen or rubbery limbs, tremors, a confident climber that suddenly won't climb. Any of those is a reptile-vet visit plus a hard audit of your UVB and calcium. This week, not this month. Also serious: going off food for days, sunken hips, or straining without droppings. Iguanas hide illness until they can't; when your gut says something is off, it is.

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.