



Green Keel-Bellied Lizards

Gastropholis prasina

INTERMEDIATE · 14–18 IN ADULT · 5–8 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · DISPLAY ONLY · EAST AFRICA

Gastropholis prasina is one of the most startling greens in the hobby: a slender, long-tailed lacertid that works the canopy of East African coastal forest and almost never comes down. Fast, alert and busy all day, they are hard to stop watching - and thin-skinned, quick to drop a tail, and genuinely unhappy in hands. Build them a tree, keep the glass between you, and enjoy the best display lizard most people have never heard of.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient (day)	78–85 °F
Basking surface	85–90 °F
Night	68–72 °F
Humidity	70–90%
UVB	Required: 6% T5 at 10–12 in
Diet	Crickets, roaches, flies
Feeding cadence	Every 1–2 days
Adult size	14–18 in
Lifespan	5–8 years



Most of that length is tail, and all of it is built for branches. This is the pose you will see most: stretched along a thin perch, watching.

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01

A Display Animal, Full Stop

Everything about this lizard says look, don't touch. The skin is thin and tears, the tail snaps off under pressure and grows back a poor imitation of itself, and a startled animal is across the enclosure before you finish reaching. **Handling is not a training problem you can solve here** - it reads as predation, and the bill arrives as an animal that hides, stops eating and fades. Give it cover enough that vanishing is always an option, and service the enclosure while it watches from a high perch. Wild-caught imports carry parasites: buy captive-bred, and screen anything else.

02

Housing: Build a Tree

Height is the whole design. Floor space is close to wasted on a species that lives on vertical bark and thin branches, so buy the tall enclosure and fill it: cork tubes, crossing branches at several heights, and broad-leaved plants dense enough to give a route to every corner and a shaded core to disappear into. An adult needs 18×18×36 at minimum, and 24×24×36 is the honest number. One male per enclosure, always.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	12×12×18	18×18×24	A smaller space helps them find prey; plant it densely to cut stress.
Juvenile	18×18×24	18×18×36	Height over floor from the start; add branch routes as they grow.
Adult	18×18×36	24×24×36	Strictly arboreal. Vertical climbing space is the whole point.
Pair	24×24×36	36×18×36	One male only, and watch any pair. Bigger is what gets them active.

Sizes in inches, L×W×H, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance for this species. Vertical height matters more than floor space at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Give them a real gradient and a hard ceiling. Ambient 78–85 °F, a basking branch at 85–90 °F, and a fall to 68–72 °F overnight. The ceiling is the part people miss: this is a forest animal, and sustained ambient above 85 °F is heat stress, not basking. Put the heat at the top where an arboreal lizard expects it, and leave a cool shaded level underneath. UVB is not optional - skip it and metabolic bone disease is the ordinary outcome. Sit a 6% T5 tube on the mesh, 10–12 in above the top perch, which puts basking UVI near 2–3, and never drop one under 10 in. Glass blocks UVB outright and mesh costs another quarter to a half. Replace tubes on schedule; output dies long before the light does.

04

Humidity & Ventilation

Hold 70–90%, and get there with water rather than a sealed box. Mist heavily morning and evening until the foliage drips, then let it dry down in between. Stagnant wet air is the fastest way to lose one of these: they want damp surroundings and moving air at once, which means real cross-ventilation, not a lid taped over for humidity. They drink droplets off leaves and ignore standing water, so the morning mist is the water bowl. Keep a shallow dish anyway.

05

Planting & Cover

Build what the lizard actually uses. A moisture-holding base of coco fiber and leaf litter, then cork tubes, thin crossing branches and broad-leaved plants running floor to ceiling; pothos and bromeliads hold mist and give them somewhere to be invisible. Security is husbandry here, not decoration: an animal with nowhere to hide stays switched on, goes off food and slides downhill. Springtails and isopods keep a wet, planted enclosure honest.

06

Feeding

Insects, and often. Crickets, small roaches and flies every one to two days, nothing wider than the space between the eyes, with waxworms as dessert rather than dinner. Gut-load feeders a day or two ahead. Dust with plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus, at most feedings: working UVB lets them build their own. Then run a D3 multivitamin weekly while they grow and twice monthly for adults, and keep it the only D3 in the rotation.

07

Health Red Flags

A healthy keel-belly is alert, bright and hard to photograph. One sitting dull and still in the open mid-morning is not relaxed, it is unwell. Watch for sunken eyes and loose, wrinkled skin (dehydration), tremors, a rubbery jaw or a kinked spine (MBD from missed UVB or calcium), and laboured breathing or bubbling at the nostrils, which in a wet enclosure means ventilation failed. Any of it earns a reptile vet, plus a fecal screen if the animal came in wild-caught.

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.