



Vietnamese Mossy Frogs

Theloderma corticale

INTERMEDIATE · 3–3.5 IN · 10–15 YR · NOCTURNAL · SEMI-AQUATIC · VIETNAM

A frog that has decided to be a rock covered in moss. *Theloderma corticale* is a small, warty, semi-aquatic climber from the wet forests of Vietnam, and it spends most of the day sitting half-submerged in cool water, doing an impression of scenery. Nobody keeps one for interaction. You keep it for the camouflage, and because the cool, clean, humid setup it wants is a real puzzle to build and hold.

AT A GLANCE

Difficulty	Intermediate
Adult size	3–3.5 in
Lifespan	10–15 years
Daytime temp	65–75 °F
Warm spot (max)	75–78 °F
Night temp	58–65 °F
Humidity	70–90 %
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet & cadence	Insects, every 2–3 days



Warty green-and-black skin that reads as wet moss is the whole species. Captive-bred animals reach NARBC tables, though not at every show.

Photo: sheilapic76 / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Camouflage, Not Contact

This is a watching animal, not a handling one. The whole defense is stillness: a mossy frog goes rigid, tucks its limbs, and becomes a clump of moss on a wet rock, and a badly startled one curls into a ball and plays dead. Handling is a cost, not a treat. The skin is permeable, so whatever is on your hands goes into the frog. Move one only when you must, with hands rinsed clean and wet, and never with soap, lotion, or sanitizer on them.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Go vertical and go wet. Adults need at least 18×18×24, and 24×18×36 is the better home: height for climbing, floor space for a broad, shallow pool. Half water and half land is the classic layout, with cork, slate, and branches breaking the surface so a frog can haul out anywhere. No racks, at any stage. Groups work only when the frogs are size-matched and the space is generous: a bigger frog swallows a smaller one, and a sick frog is easy to miss in a group. Never mix species.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Metamorph	12×12×12	18×12×18	Small and delicate; vertical setup, shallow water, easy exits.
Juvenile	18×12×18	18×18×24	Runs cooler than most tropical frogs: hold 65–75 °F.
Subadult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Groups need size-matching and space; a bigger frog will eat a smaller one.
Adult	18×18×24	24×18×36	Semi-arboreal and part submerged: height plus a wide, shallow pool.

Habitat-OS life-stage guidance for *Theloderma corticale*. Dimensions in inches; every stage wants height, and none of them belongs in a rack.

03

Cool Rooms and Dim Light

This is where most mossy frogs are lost. They want 65–75 °F through the day, a warm spot no higher than 75–78 °F, and a night drop to 58–65 °F. Sustained heat stresses them fast, so the real question is how you cool a room in August, not how you heat one. Heat rocks and under-tank mats have no place here. Skip bright basking bulbs; a low-output UVB tube is a small, genuine benefit, run on a timer over a shaded, planted setup.

04

Humidity and Clean Water

Humidity sits at 70–90 %, which a screen top will not hold on its own; expect a glass or partly covered lid, with a strip left open so the air still moves. Mist by hand or on a timer. The pool matters more than the mist, because these frogs sit in it. **Every drop of water they touch must be dechlorinated, including the misting water.** Chlorine and chloramine kill amphibians. Change the pool water often, keep it shallow, and let nothing scented near the enclosure.

05

Moss, Cork, and Hiding Places

Build a wall of texture, then let the frog vanish into it. Live moss, sphagnum, cork slabs, and rounded stone give crevices at every height, while pothos or bromeliads hold humidity and break sightlines. Avoid loose sand and gravel entirely; a frog that grabs a cricket off the floor swallows whatever is under it. A hide at the waterline and one up high matter more than looks. A frog you cannot find is a frog that feels safe.

06

Feeding Small and Often

Insectivores with simple tastes: crickets, worms, and flies, offered every 2–3 days. Keep prey no wider than the space between the frog's eyes. An adult tops out near 3.5 inches, so this is small food. Dust with calcium and a vitamin supplement on most feedings. They hunt by ambush after dark, so feed in the evening and give them quiet. Pull uneaten crickets out the same night, because crickets will chew on a sitting frog.

07

Health Red Flags

A cryptic frog that stops hiding is telling you something. Watch for a frog sitting out in the open, turning down food across several feedings, or going thin across the hips. Reddening on the belly and thighs, swelling or bloat, or skin that looks cloudy and sloughs in sheets all point to infection. Those are same-week problems, not wait-and-see: check water and temperature, then find a vet who treats amphibians. Frogs decline quietly and 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.