

# Freshwater Mussel

## A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

### Immediate Care and Handling

Open the shipping container and remove the plastic bag containing the mussels. Inspect the bag and contents for damage. Float the unopened bag in your holding tank or aquarium, which should be filled with water from a spring or pond. If water from these sources is unavailable, conditioned tap water may be acceptable—unless your tap water comes from copper pipes less than 3 years old. If that is the case, it could contain enough leached copper to be toxic to the mussels. After 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the size of the shipping bag, open the bag and decant (pour off) the shipping water, and then add the mussels to your holding tank.

### Habitat Set Up and Maintenance

Freshwater mussels are best kept in large outdoor containers, pools, or water gardens. Under such conditions they help filter the water and need little or no care. (But be aware that they are relished by raccoons.) Because they do best at water temperatures of 10 to 16° C (50 to 61° F), mussels are difficult to keep in aquaria for extended periods.

To keep mussels in an aquarium, prepare the tank at least 2 weeks before receiving the mussels. You will need a 10 gal or larger tank for 2 to 3 small mussels or 1 large mussel. Position the tank in the coolest spot available. Layer its bottom with 8 cm (3¼") of coarse sand or gravel so the mussels can burrow. Fill the tank with water and add floating plants such as *Elodea*, *Cabomba*, or *Ceratophyllum*. Mussels will uproot bottom-rooted plants, so these are not recommended.

If you are using a filter, turn it on or connect an airstone to circulate the water. If you stock the tank with fish, supplemental feeding of the mussels may not be necessary, especially if you do not use a filter; otherwise, you can use our Algae Food Source (item #142337) or our Daphnia Solid Food (item #142316). Keep a careful watch on the aquarium and remove any mussel that dies. A dead mussel will foul the water, killing other animals in the tank. Remember that the mussels may not survive well at room temperatures.

### FAQs

#### ***Where are mussels found?***

They live in the substrate of streams, ponds, and lakes on all continents except Antarctica. Most live in shallow water, but some live on the bottom of deep lakes.

#### ***What is the difference between a mussel and a clam?***

These are not taxonomic terms. The shells of clams are round or oval. The shell of a mussel is elongate and

asymmetrical.

***How do mussels feed?***

They are filter feeders. Water is drawn in through an incurrent siphon, organic particles are filtered out and passed on to the mouth, and the water expelled through an excurrent siphon.

***Will my mussels reproduce?***

Although they may release gametes, it is unlikely that they will successfully reproduce in an aquarium, even if they survive for an extended period. Mussels have a complex life cycle that includes a larval stage that is a temporary parasite on fish gills. Reproduction is more likely in ponds stocked with several species of fish.

**Problems?** We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

**Orders and replacements:** 1-800-334-5551, then select Customer Service.

**Technical Support and Questions:** [caresheets@carolina.com](mailto:caresheets@carolina.com)



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