



## **Crested, Mossy and Gargoyle Geckos**

### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT CRESTED GECKOS:**

1. 60x45x45 Glass terrarium
2. SPOT LIGHT/DHP with Thermostat
3. BROAD RANGE VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT
4. UV
5. DECOR

### **Terrarium Set-Up**

All heating should be positioned on top in a suitable dome fitting at one end of the terrarium, creating a warm basking area of approximately 27c. The opposite end should have no heating, creating a cooler area at the furthest point. A thermostat is essential to maintaining a safe steady temperature. Your aim is to maintain an ambient temperature in the centre of the enclosure of between 24c to 26c. We suggest using Arcadia's Deep Heat Projector as it offers great infrared A and B output, and no visible light so it can be left running 24 hours a day. This can be extremely helpful if you have a cool room, as it will prevent low nighttime temperatures that may otherwise adversely affect the animal. Nighttime ambient temperatures should be maintained above 20c. Set your thermostat to 25c and place your thermometer and thermostat sensor in the middle of your terrarium, making sure your thermostat sensor does not sit directly on a wet object or directly under the heating. Double check the warmer spots nearer to the heater are not excessively high. Alternatively, you can set your warmer corner temperature by changing the thermostat to 28c and placing the thermostat sensor approximately 10cm down from the corner nearest to the heating. Just be sure your ambient temperatures are also running at the desired levels.

### **Lighting.**

Despite the popular myth that they don't require UV lighting, tests and research have shown that they do benefit from it greatly and it can prevent a multitude of problems. With the correct UV your animal will thrive rather than survive. UVB will help with your animal's natural synthesis of D3 vitamins, and the UVA helps with vision. Arcadia's Shade dweller unit is best suited as it was designed specifically for crepuscular species like the geckos in this care sheet. It offers not only the correct levels of UVB but unlike most other UV tubes, it has a lower level of UVA more closely matching the light levels at dawn and dusk or those that are found in dense forests. It is suggested use is for 12-14 hours a day. The UV tube should be positioned towards the warm end, creating a UV gradient much like you're heating. Reptiles have adapted to living with strong UV radiation from above. Placing the UV tube level or within 45° of the eye could damage it severely (photokeratoconjunctivitis or cataracts) symptoms include swelling of the eye and area around it or cloudy eyes. This is thankfully not too common, but it is better to be safe and not allow your animal to sit alongside or within a few inches of your tube. Always remember to replace your T5 tubes every 12 months, unless the manufacturer suggests otherwise. The tube's UV producing capability will degrade, though the tube will show no obvious sign. Failure to give your new gecko the proper levels and quality of UV could result in irreversible Metabolic Bone Disorder. Never place your terrarium near radiators, direct sunlight, drafts, busy areas or appliances that create a lot of noise.

### **Substrate, Cleaning And Furniture**

Orchid bark or Crestie life is recommended as a simple choice. The inclusion of a substrate such as coir and moss will help absorb water from spraying and maintain the humidity. Often the better choice is a 'Bio Active' substrate. This can be a cleaner and easier way to manage the Gecko's enclosure. As well as being more aesthetically pleasing. Essentially your substrate layers will act as a living organism, breaking down small amounts of waste. This will keep your animal's enclosure looking and smelling cleaner. To be fully 'Bio Active', live plants will need to be added also. To set up a 'Bio Active' enclosure you will first need a drainage layer. Habistats Amazon Clay Balls work well. Top this with a mesh or fleece layer to prevent the substrates from mixing. On top of this a good quality soil based will be added. Earthmix by Arcadia is an excellent choice as well as Habistats Jungle Bio, or a mix of the 2. The next layer is more decorative. You could use a mix of orchid bark, moss and leaf litter. To the top layer you will also add what is often referred to as 'Clean up crew' or isopods. Springtails and woodlice are recommended. These break down the waste produced by the animal and plants, into something the plants can feed on. Live plants are a wonderful way of providing excellent cover for your animal. If you are using live plants, be sure to provide a safe source of LED lighting such as the Jungle Bar by Arcadia. Also, only buy non-toxic plants from a safe source and remember they will grow and semi regular trimming will be required. Regardless of your substrate choice you will need to spot clean your tank regularly, if done properly a full tank clean should only be necessary once a month (non Bio Active). If cared for properly a 'Bio Active' enclosure will hardly ever need cleaning. You will still need to spot clean the larger bits of waste and dead leaves where appropriate. Only use disinfectants specifically designed for reptiles. Soaps, detergents and other disinfectants can be toxic.

Spray your Gecko every day (in hot weather twice) to provide water droplets on the foliage as one source of drinking water. Contrary to popular belief these species of gecko do not require an excessively humid or wet environment. Branches and furniture should dry out a few hours after spraying. The humidity found naturally in the environment from spraying is normally enough, especially in a 'Bio Active' enclosure where suitable soil moisture is being maintained for the live plants. Spraying too frequently or too much can cause issues like stagnant/rotting substrate from becoming waterlogged. This can lead to nasty smells, and an increase in bad bacteria and fungus, leading to lung and skin problems with your animal.

### **Feeding And Vitamins**

Variety is key, as is keeping the animal keen, actively hunting and looking for food. These species of Geckos eat a mix of live insects and natural fruit and plant sugars. We would suggest whole days when the animal has no access to food of any kind. Feed every 2-3 days changing the food source regularly. Crickets, Locust, Roaches and calciworms form a good choice for the insect protein part of the staple diet, whereas mealworms and waxworms should be used sparingly. The 'Fruit' section of the diet is largely made up of a powdered formula that you mix with a little water and place in a small pot for them to lick. There is a great deal of these on the market right now. We like to use Pangea and Habistats Crested gecko Diet. The powdered formula should make up about 75% of the diet. Insects about 25%, less if your powdered formula contains insects. This ratio may change depending on the species, so be sure to check with the seller. These species of Geckos can be very picky with their food. Quite often when presented with an abundance of food they will just eat what they fancy and wait for the next time it becomes available. Also when offered the same food flavour constantly, it can be difficult to change it. Be strict! These animals have no idea what a good diet is and in a wild situation the wild dictates the available nutrition. For this reason we need to keep the animal keen to eat. So we wouldn't suggest feeding every day and we suggest only using one food type per meal. If the animal chooses not to eat this meal then substitutes should not be given. You don't want the animal to know what is coming or when. Hopefully this will keep your animal keen to eat and give them a broad and balanced diet. The best time to feed is an evening, shortly after lights out. Your animal will be starting to think about coming out for its evening wander, if it isn't already. Insect quantities per meal can be difficult to gauge. The best way to judge what quantity of fast moving insects constitutes a meal is to drop in to the enclosure a limited amount, say half a dozen crickets or locusts of the correct size. If your animal is hungry it will eat immediately. If it does, continue to put a couple of insects in every time it finishes, until your Gecko appears full and shows little interest in chasing the food. Remember never leave excessive amounts of crickets in the vivarium, as they can cause injury to your animal! With Calciworms, Mealworms and Waxworms, place them in an escape proof bowl in the enclosure for 24 hours. Mealworms are not a great source of food despite their popularity. They contain high levels of phosphorus to calcium. Even with added calcium the levels can cause undetectable issues and as such should not make up a substantial amount of the animals diet. It is worth pointing out that it is a complete myth that a Mealworm will eat out of your animal if not properly chewed. Powdered formula should be mixed and introduced to the enclosure in the evening and left till the following day, possibly longer depending on the manufacturer's recommendation. Just remember to leave gaps between meals. A good quality vitamin and mineral supplement is essential to the well-being of your animal, always read the packaging carefully and dust all insects you feed them in it. A small amount can also be added to the powdered formula, before adding water. We recommend Earth Pro A on every meal. This is a great all round natural supplement that is impossible to overdose. This only works well in unison with a well thought out set up and a good quality UV source. Geckos like these, also benefit from having a small bowl of this powder left in their enclosure. Like a lot of reptiles they are pretty well adapted to know when calcium levels are dropping. As such they will self medicate by licking calcium out of a bowl when required. For further information on

supplements, please refer to the Arcadia reptile website. It's stacked full of great information on this subject. Failure to maintain a good supply of vitamins and minerals will result in irreversible illness, such as Metabolic Bone Disorder.

### **Handling, Health, Additional Notes**

Do not handle your Gecko immediately after a move; leave at least four weeks to allow your animal to settle or until your animal is feeding well and has been for 3-4 weeks. If you don't, your animal may become defensive and aggressive and/or it may become reclusive and fail to feed properly. After the initial waiting period, handling may begin slowly.

Geckos like these are naturally friendly. You do not need to restrain or excessively handle them to make them good pets. Always handle your animal near to a surface, accidents can happen, and they don't fly, despite their regular attempts to do so! Most Geckos are very shy animals, so it is very important you follow these simple instructions as failure to do so will almost certainly lead to high levels of stress in your animal. Always use common sense when handling animals. It is also important to remember not to touch or grab your gecko's tail. Geckos can drop their tail when they feel threatened and in the case of Crested geckos they don't grow back, unlike Gargoyle Geckos. Crested geckos also have what is best described as a sticky pad at the end of their tail, much like those on their toes. When moving a Crested gecko, be sure this does not catch you or any other object nearby as the movement may apply enough force to make the animal release its tail.

When it comes to your animal's health, if you are ever in doubt ask a respected dealer for, they're advice, and if still in doubt go to a specialist veterinarian.

There are a few simple things to look out for.

- Unusual lethargy
- Prolonged lack or loss of appetite
- Eyes sinking back into the head (dehydration)
- Eyes unclear and or sticky • Runny nose
- Prolonged diarrhoea
- Trouble shedding skin on extremities
- Twitching or shaking
- Abnormally forming bone structure

Avoid putting your gecko in with any other animals or each other as they are very territorial and better off living alone. They will sometimes live with each other of the same species if the correct sex ratios are followed, but you must be prepared to separate a moment's notice and provide them with a new permanent home. If purchasing a second gecko of the same species, make sure they are of compatible size and get equal amounts of food to ensure the same rate of growth. Ask a respected dealer for information.

On a final note, and to summarise, these species of geckos are shy animals often choosing to only come out in the evening or at night, so you may not see a great deal of them. As such they can be nervous, but often calm down well with time, space and patience. They all suit perfectly the classic 'Bio Active' enclosure so even when they are not about, you'll still have a beautiful little piece of nature in the room to enjoy. They are clean and easy to maintain, and in nearly all cases make great family pets.

This care sheet was written by Aurora Reptiles Huyton Liverpool L368DW 07872010042