

Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko (*Uroplatus phantasticus*)

Difficulty: Hard

Satanic leaf-tailed geckos are small, 4" long geckos with bodies and tails that resemble dead leaves, including veining and notching. They have no eyelids, prominent horn-like protrusions over their eyes, and no dermal fringe. Like other arboreal geckos, they also have wide toes that give them the ability to climb up smooth surfaces.

Satanic leaf-tailed geckos are native to Madagascar, a large island off the east coast of Africa. They are most commonly found in forests on the eastern edge of the island, where they live in trees and shrubs.

Satanic leaf-tailed geckos can live up to about 15 years when cared for properly. Due to their poor tolerance of inappropriate husbandry and low handleability, these geckos are best kept as display animals by more experienced owners.

Shopping List

- Front-opening 18" x 18" x 18" glass terrarium
- 25w white incandescent heat bulb
- Compact fluorescent forest UVB bulb, 26w
- 18" incandescent terrarium hood with reflector
- Plug-in light timer
- Infrared thermometer
- Pressure sprayer
- Digital thermometer/hygrometer
- 2-4" naturalistic substrate
- Branches
- Large vines
- Live or artificial plants
- Magnetic feeding ledge
- Small gecko feeding cups (plastic)
- Calcium supplement w/o D3
- Multivitamin supplement

Housing

Satanic leaf-tailed geckos need an enclosure that is large enough to let them explore, hunt, and generally exercise natural behaviors. They are considered arboreal, which means that they are a tree-dwelling species, although they typically live much closer to the ground than other arboreals. This is why the minimum recommended enclosure size for a single satanic leaf-tailed gecko is 18"L x 18"W x 18"H.

When possible, larger is always better. Glass enclosures are best, which enables them to climb the walls, but PVC is also an option.

Can multiple satanic leaf-tailed geckos be housed in the same enclosure?

Yes. Groups of satanic leaf-tailed geckos seem to be able to be housed together fairly peacefully, as long as there is no more than one male per enclosure. However, to maximize likelihood of success, increase the volume of the enclosure by 50% for each additional gecko.

Lighting & UVB

Leaf-tailed geckos are crepuscular, which means that they are active at night, but mostly around sunset. This means that they are likely to prefer cooler temperatures, are exposed to low levels of indirect UVB during the day, and have exceptional night vision. Lamps should be on for 12 hours/day.

UVB Lighting

Leaf-tailed geckos are sensitive animals that do best when the conditions of their natural habitat are replicated as accurately as possible. This includes providing appropriate levels of UVB. UVB lighting can be tricky, because in order to get the right strength of UVB (measured by UV Index, or UVI), distance must be considered.

As a rough estimate, to provide appropriate UVB to a satanic leaf-tailed gecko in an 18" tall enclosure, with branches and vines for climbing, you will need one 26w Zoo Med Reptisun 5.0 compact fluorescent bulb in the 18" Zoo Med Naturalistic Terrarium Hood (the other socket will be for the heat bulb). Place the basking area no closer than 4" below the lamp.

(These recommendations are approximations. It is strongly recommended to use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 1.0-2.0 in the basking area at the top of the enclosure.)

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated. Leaf-tailed geckos, however, are *cold-blooded*, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures in order to regulate their body temperature. In the wild, leaf-tailed geckos warm up during the day by sleeping in a warm patch of sunlight. In captivity, sunlight can be replicated with a heat lamp as a source of gentle heat.

- **Basking area temperature:** 80-85°F (27-29°C)
- **Average air temperature:** 68-77°F (20-25°C)
- **Cool zone temperature:** 65-68°F (18-20°C)

Generally speaking, it doesn't take much to achieve such a low basking temperature. If your home tends to be warm during the day, you may not even need a heat source. However, if your home is like most and maintains a daytime temperature of 70-74°F, then you'll want a gentle heat source to create a slightly warmer spot in the enclosure. A 25w white incandescent bulb like the Exo Terra Daytime Heat Lamp should be plenty. However, if you notice that the basking area is too cool, you will need higher wattage bulbs.

The basking area should be a vine or branch directly under the heat lamp. Because your leaf-tailed gecko is arboreal and will be living in a tall enclosure, the warmest temperatures will be at the top (near the

heat lamp), and the coolest temperatures will be toward the bottom. You will need vines, branches, and foliage at all levels to allow for proper thermoregulation.

To measure the general temperature of different areas of your terrarium, use an infrared thermometer (a.k.a. temperature gun). To passively track basking temperature, use a digital probe thermometer, with the probe placed on the basking surface under the heat source. The [Etekcity 774](#) is a good infrared thermometer, and most reptile-brand [digital probe thermometers](#) function well.

Humidity

Satanic leaf-tailed geckos do best in a high-humidity environment, with an **average humidity of 75-80% during the day and 90-100% at night**, as measured by a [digital probe hygrometer](#) with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure. Humidity levels that are consistently too low can cause health problems for your gecko. However, it is natural for humidity to be lower in the warm area and higher in the cool area. It is also normal and healthy for humidity levels to rise at night and fall during the day.

To raise the humidity in your leaf-tailed gecko's enclosure (and provide a source of drinking water), use a pump-style pressure sprayer to heavily wet down the enclosure every evening, and in the morning if necessary. Alternatively you can use an automatic misting system.

It's best to use tap water for misting, rather than distilled or reverse-osmosis water. Tap water contains essential minerals that are important to your gecko's health, and distilled water may actually suck those minerals out of your gecko.

That being said, a small bowl of clean water should always be available for your gecko to drink from.

Substrate

Because leaf-tailed geckos are arboreal (tree-dwelling), they don't spend much time on the ground. Although it's not necessary as a bedding for them, it's very useful for helping to stabilize humidity. It also acts as a cushion if they fall from their perch, which does happen occasionally.

It's best to use a moisture-retentive substrate that is similar to the soil in a leaf-tailed gecko's natural habitat. Here are a few options:

- [DIY tropical mix: 60% organic topsoil, 40% coconut fiber](#)
- [Lugarti Natural Reptile Bedding](#)
- [Zoo Med Reptisoil](#)
- [The Bio Dude Terra Fauna](#)

For best results, add a generous layer of leaf litter on top.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 3-4 months.

Décor

Decorations play a vital role in your leaf-tailed gecko's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nicer! Without décor, your gecko's terrarium is just a glass box with dirt and a feeding ledge.

Branches, vines, and live or artificial foliage work well as décor in a satanic leaf-tailed gecko terrarium. (Live plants are particularly effective for helping maintain humidity.) Arrange these items in a way that encourages your gecko to climb and explore, and provides a variety of options for places to sleep during the day. Vertical, horizontal, and diagonal climbing surfaces of varying widths should be used as a way to provide variety and different forms of exercise for your gecko.

Food

Leaf-tailed geckos are *insectivores*, which means that they need to eat insects in order to get the nutrition that they need. Leaf-tailed geckos are avid hunters, so live insects will need to be provided in order to stimulate their appetite.

Juveniles should be fed daily; adults can be fed every other day. Offer as much as they can eat in one night. It's safe and actually healthy to skip a feeding every once in a while for adults.

Best insects: crickets, dubia roaches, discoid roaches, red runner roaches, darkling beetles, snails (captive bred), small locusts

Feeder insects should be gutloaded for 24-48 hours prior to feeding to maximize nutrition.

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier pet that always looks forward to mealtime.

Supplements

All feeder insects (excluding snails with shells) need to be "dusted" with a light coating of calcium powder to balance the calcium-phosphorus ratio. There are many options, but Arcadia Earthpro-A and Repashy CalciumPlus LoD are both solid options. For best results, use as directed by the label.

For more information about satanic leaf-tailed gecko care, read the full-length [Leaf-Tailed Gecko Care Guide](#) at ReptiFiles.com!