

Emerald Tree Skink (*Lamprolepis smaragdina*)

Difficulty: Intermediate

The emerald tree skink is a 8.5-10" long lizard with a sharply tapered head, long toes, and smooth round scales. Coloring is generally bright green with brown hind legs speckled with white, although some individuals are speckled with black or partly to entirely brown in color. Their black eyes are framed by yellow eyelids.

Emerald tree skinks are native to southeast Asia, and are particularly common in the Philippines and Indonesia. Their preferred habitat is humid tropical forest, where they spend most of their time scrambling up and down tall tree trunks.

Emerald tree skinks can make entertaining, personable pets. If you pay attention to providing the best emerald tree skink care, your pet should enjoy a lifespan of at least 7 years.

Shopping List

- 18"L x 18"W x 36"H front-opening terrarium, mesh top
- Dimmable dome heat lamp
- 60w heat bulb
- Arcadia ShadeDweller UVB kit
- 18" ~6500K high-output LED grow light
- Surge protector with digital timer
- Digital thermometer/hygrometer device with probes, x2
- Pressure sprayer
- 22 quarts coconut fiber or sphagnum moss substrate
- Climbing branches and/or vines
- Live and/or artificial foliage (live preferred)
- Magnetic gecko feeding ledge
- Gecko cups
- Calcium and multivitamin supplements
- Soft-tipped feeding tweezers

Housing

Emerald tree skinks need an enclosure that is large enough to give them adequate opportunity to thermoregulate, explore, hunt, and generally exercise natural behaviors. They are also arboreal, which means that as a tree-dwelling species, they require a tall enclosure. The minimum recommended enclosure size for housing a single emerald tree skink is 18"L x 18"W x 36"H, or 45 x 45 x 90cm. If possible, however, larger is highly recommended — particularly taller!

For the lizard's mental health and ease of access, it is best to use an enclosure that is front-opening and opaque on all sides but the front. It also must be well-ventilated to discourage stagnation and mold growth.

Can multiple emerald tree skinks be housed together?

Emerald tree skinks can be housed singly or in groups successfully. However, if you wish to house multiple individuals together, make sure to use a proportionally larger enclosure, and don't house males and females together unless you plan to breed.

Lighting & UVB

Emerald tree skinks are diurnal, which means that they are most active during the day. This also means that they need exposure to bright light and UVB during the day for best mental and physical health. Light sources should be turned on for 13 hours/day during summer and 11 hours/day during winter, with gradual adjustments in-between.

Alternatively, you can use a smart timer (I've been happy with [Kasa](#)) to sync your lights with local sunrise and sunset times.

UVB Lighting

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. To provide appropriate UVB to an emerald tree skink in a 36" tall enclosure, you will need the [Arcadia ShadeDweller kit](#), with the basking branch 6-8" (15-20cm) below the lamps.

For larger, you will need one [Arcadia T5 HO Forest 6%](#) or [Zoo Med T5 HO ReptiSun 5.0](#), most of the length of the enclosure, mounted in a reflective T5 HO fixture such as the [Arcadia ProT5](#) or the [Vivarium Electronics T5 HO](#) fixture. The basking branch should be placed 9-11" (23-28cm) below the lamps.

(These recommendations are approximations based on the assumption that there is mesh between the lamp and basking area. It is strongly recommended to use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of around 2.0 – 3.0 in the basking area.)

General Illumination

A UVB bulb alone isn't bright enough to meet an emerald tree skink's light needs. So you will need to supplement with a bright, ~6500K T5 HO fluorescent or LED lamp, long enough to span most of the enclosure. This is particularly important if you have live plants in the enclosure, but it is also valuable for providing additional illumination and supporting your pet's general wellbeing as a diurnal lizard.

The [Arcadia Jungle Dawn LED Bar](#) and the [Bio Dude Glow & Grow](#) are my preferred choices for this purpose.

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is regulated automatically.

Emerald tree skinks, however, are *cold-blooded*, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures to regulate their body temperature. In the wild, emerald tree skinks warm up by basking in a patch of sunlight. In captivity, the warmth of sunlight can be replicated with heat lamps.

- **Basking area temperature: 95°F (35°C)**
- **Cool side temperature: 75-85°F (24-29°C)**
- **Nighttime temperature: 68-77°F (20-25°C)**

One 60w heat bulb housed in a dome lamp with a ceramic socket should be enough to do the job for one skink, but if you need more heat for larger enclosure with more skinks. If you notice that the basking area is too warm, dial down the heat down with a lamp dimmer. If your basking area is too cool, you will need a higher wattage bulb.

The basking area should be sturdy branch or vine directly under the heat lamp. The warmest temperatures in the enclosure will be at the top (near the heat lamp), and the coolest temperatures will be toward the bottom. You will need to place climbing material at all levels of the enclosure to allow for proper thermoregulation.

To track the temperatures in your terrarium, use digital probe thermometers. One should have the probe secured with a zip tie on the basking surface under the heat source, and there should be another probe in a shaded area near the lower middle of the enclosure. Most reptile-brand digital probe thermometers function well for this purpose.

Humidity

Emerald tree skinks do best in a high-humidity environment, with a **daytime average humidity around 70%**, and nighttime humidity levels spiking up to 100%.

Humidity should be measured by at least one digital probe hygrometer with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure. Note that low humidity levels can cause health problems for your pet, but so can insufficient ventilation.

To raise the humidity in your emerald tree skinks' enclosure (and provide an extra source of drinking water), use a pump-style pressure sprayer to wet down the enclosure every morning and evening, preferably when it's dark. If needed, you may mist again (lightly) in the mid-afternoon. Installing an automatic misting system like [MistKing](#) is strongly recommended, as it makes misting such a large enclosure much less of an inconvenience.

If you live in an area with a dry climate, it may be beneficial to install a cool mist humidifier or fogger such as the [Evergreen Reptile Humidifier](#) to help with creating a high-humidity environment at night. Program it to turn on and off for a few hours prior to "sunrise". Humidifiers, foggers, and misters must be used with distilled water and periodically disinfected to prevent illness. Never use a humidifier or fogger during the day, as this increases the potential for illness.

Substrate

Emerald tree skinks spend most of their time in the upper levels of their enclosure, so substrate functions primarily as a cushion against falls, as well as humidity maintenance. A 2-4" / 10cm layer of moistened coconut fiber or sphagnum moss will do the trick. In an 18" x 18" enclosure, that will take 11-22 quarts of substrate. Change the substrate at least once a month to maintain good hygiene.

Alternatively, you can go bioactive, which helps maintain humidity and reduces substrate waste. [The Bio Dude's Terra Fauna kit](#) is a good way to get started if you're new to bioactive setups. However, note that

bioactive enclosures require a much thicker substrate layer, are very heavy, and require the inclusion of live plants to work properly.

Enclosure Décor

Decorations play a vital role in your skink's enclosure as environmental enrichment. These items provide climbing opportunities, hiding places, encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nicer!

Options: manzanita branches, ghost wood branches, cork hollows, vines, live, nontoxic tropical plants, artificial plants, cork bark background, 3D background

Dracaena, hibiscus, ficus, pothos, philodendron, spider plant, staghorn fern, bromeliad, and air plants are all safe options for live plants and will help maintain high humidity levels.

Food

Emerald tree skinks are primarily *insectivorous*, which means that they get most of their nutrients from eating a wide variety of insects. However, they are also known to occasionally eat fruit and flowers.

Juveniles should be fed daily, while adults can be fed every other day. One meal should consist of as many insects as your skink will eat via feeding tweezers in 5 minutes. Insects should be slightly smaller than your skink's head. A dish of crested gecko diet should also be offered 1x/week.

Best feeder insects for emerald tree skinks: crickets, dubia roaches, discoid roaches, red head roaches, grasshoppers/locusts

Best crested gecko diet powders: Pangea, Repashy, Black Panther Zoological, Leapin' Leachie, Zoo Med, Lugarti

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

To ensure that your emerald tree skink is getting all of the vitamins and minerals that they need, you will need a calcium powder and a multivitamin powder — or a good all-in-one like the [Arcadia Earthpro supplement system](#) or [Repashy Calcium Plus LoD](#). For best results, use as directed by the manufacturer.

Water

Although your gecko will get drinking water from daily mistings, it's best to always keep a bowl of clean water available on the feeding ledge.