

Golden Poison Frog

Phylllobates terribilis



Care Guide

Species Description & Overview

Adult Size

Golden Poison Frogs are members of the poison dart frog family, growing to lengths between 1.85"-2.36" (4.7-6cm). This species can weigh up to 30 grams as adults. Females grow larger than males, with females ranging from 5-6cm, and males staying closer to 4.7 cm. They are the largest species in the poison dart frog family.

Subspecies, Colors, & Morphs

Golden Poison Frogs are often known for their yellow coloration, but there are actually 4 main colorations, or morphs, that they can come in. These are mint, yellow, orange blackfoot, and orange. In all cases, the adults have bright coloring, while the juveniles are black with golden stripes on their backs. These juvenile colors fade by the time the frog reaches ~18 months of age.



Above: Mint Golden Poison Frog

Below: Yellow Golden Poison Frog



Above: Orange Blackfoot Golden Poison Frog

Below: Orange Golden Poison Frog



Life Expectancy

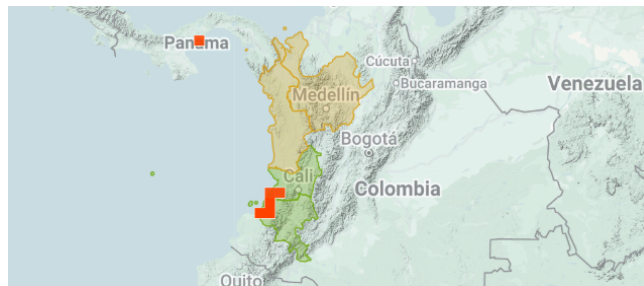
Life expectancy in captivity is estimated to be between 5-10 years, with some individuals being recorded as living to 20 years. Optimal husbandry practices are important to keeping your Golden Poison Frog living to the maximum life expectancy. In the wild, they have very few natural predators due to their toxicity levels, but life expectancy has not been fully researched.



Golden Poison Frog Tadpole

Native Range & Habitat

Golden Poison Frogs are native to the humid rainforests in Colombia, where they are endemic. Their native range sees at least 5 meters of rain per year, with high temperatures and humidity levels.



Range of Golden Poison Frog observations on iNaturalist

Fun Facts

Golden Poison Frogs are one of the most toxic organisms in the world, and are 20x more toxic than other Poison Dart Frog species, with the ability to kill up to 10 adult men in the wild due to their batrachotoxin. In captivity, however, they are harmless due to differences in diet between wild and captive populations. Dart frogs normally eat ants, termites, and beetles that cause their batrachotoxin, but this diet is not fed to Golden Poison Frogs in captivity.

Indigenous people use Golden Poison Frog toxins on their blow darts for hunting, which is why Poison Frogs are known as “Poison Dart Frogs”.

Unlike many frog species, Golden Poison Frogs are diurnal.

Caring for Golden Poison Frogs

Enclosure Size, Setup, & Decor

The size of a Golden Poison Frog enclosure depends on how many frogs you keep in your colony. The enclosure should have 10 gallons per frog. For example, for 3 Golden Poison Frogs, you would need a 30 gallon enclosure.

Inside the enclosure, there should be live plant coverage to make the enclosure naturalistic and help with cleaning the enclosure. There should also be very little ventilation, if any, to promote higher humidity levels.

In addition to live plants, there should also be hiding places, visual barriers, and a water dish.

Substrate

One of the best substrates to use is ABG substrate, which consists of a mix of orchid bark, coco fiber, charcoal, peat moss, and tree fern fiber. Sphagnum moss and leaf litter should also be added on top of the substrate.

Temperature, Humidity, & Lighting

Golden Poison Frog enclosures should be between 60-80°F (15.5-26.6°C) during the day. Temperatures should be higher during the day, with a temperature drop at night. Low to mid 70's is best during the day out of this temperature range. Temperatures should **never** exceed 80F (26.6°C) during the day, as warmer temperatures can be harmful to the health of the frogs. Temperature should be monitored with a temperature gauge.

Humidity should be at 80% or higher.

When it comes to lighting Golden Poison Frog enclosures, UVB is the most important light that this species will need, since it helps with processing vitamin D3 in the body. Full spectrum lighting can also be helpful for the frogs, and is especially important if live plants are included in the enclosure. Additional heating is only needed if the enclosure is not reaching the required temperature range where it is placed in the home.

Diet

Due to feeder availability and diminishing poison capabilities, Golden Poison Frogs in captivity have a different diet than their wild counterparts. Flightless fruit flies make a great staple feeder, but they can also be fed pinhead crickets, isopods, springtails, and more.

Works Cited

Alvarez, M. C., & Wiley, M. (2011). *Phylllobates terribilis*. Animal Diversity Web.

https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Phylllobates_terribilis/

American Museum of Natural History. (2024). *Golden Poison Frog* | *American Museum of Natural History*. American Museum of Natural History; American Museum of Natural History.

<https://www.amnh.org/explore/news-blogs/on-exhibit-posts/discovering-the-golden-poison-frog>

Aquarium of the Pacific. (n.d.). *Aquarium of the Pacific* | *Online Learning Center* | *Golden Poison Dart Frog*. www.aquariumofpacific.org; Aquarium of the Pacific. Retrieved November 5, 2024, from https://www.aquariumofpacific.org/onlinelearningcenter/species/golden_poison_dart_frog

Barrio-Amoros, C. (2020). THE KISS OF DEATH: *Phylllobates terribilis*, the most toxic vertebrate on the planet. In *ResearchGate*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338924970_THE_KISS_OF_DEATH_Phylllobates_terribilis_is_the_most_toxic_vertibrate_on_the_planet

Contributors to Reptipedia. (2024). *Golden poison dart frog*. Reptipedia; Fandom, Inc.

https://reptiles.fandom.com/wiki/Golden_poison_dart_frog

Orange Golden Poison Frog Photo

Golden Poison Dart Frog (Phylllobates terribilis). (n.d.). INaturalist. Retrieved November 1, 2024, from <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/21217-Phylllobates-terribilis>

Golden Poison Dart Frog - mint green morph (Phylllobates terribilis). (2022, January 9).

Zoochat.com; Zoo Chat. <https://www.zoochat.com/community/media/golden-poison-dart-frog-mint-green-morph-phylllobates-terribilis.562599/>

Mint Golden Poison Frog Photo

Josh's Frogs. (2020). *Phylllobates terribilis*. Josh's Frogs; Josh's Frogs.

<https://joshsfrogs.com/care-sheet/phylllobates-terribilis>

Josh's Frogs. (2020b, March 16). *Phylllobates terribilis* "Mint" TADPOLE - *Golden Poison Dart Frog*.

Josh's Frogs. <https://joshsfrogs.com/sp/phylllobates-terribilis-mint-tadpole-golden-poison-dart-frog-taddart055>

Golden Poison Frog Tadpole Photo

Josh's Frogs. (2024). *ABG Mix (4 quart)*. Josh's Frogs; Josh's Frogs. <https://joshsfrogs.com/sp/abg-mix-4-quart-jf00504>

ABG Substrate information

Knight, D. (2014). *Phyllobates Terribilis care sheet*. The World of Frogs.
<https://theworldoffrogs.weebly.com/phyllobates-terribilis-care-sheet.html>

Moore, L. (2022, May 15). *Golden Poison Frog and Mint Poison Frog (North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher) · iNaturalist*. Pinterest. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/324399979422813644/>

Mint Golden Dart Frog Photo

Pangea Reptile LLC. (2023). *Pangea Premium ABG Substrate*. Pangea Reptile LLC.
<https://www.pangeareptile.com/products/abg-substrate>

ABG Substrate information

Phyllobates terribilis "oranje black foot" - Dutch Rana. (2017, May 10). Dutch Rana.
<https://www.dutchrana.nl/shop/kickers/pijlgifkickers/phyllobates/phyllobates-terribilis-oranje-black-foot/>

Orange Blackfoot Golden Poison Frog Photo

Pin page. (2014). Pinterest. <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/581034789395561382/>

Yellow Golden Poison Frog Photo

Rodriguez, J. (2023, July 18). *Poison Dart Frog Care Sheet*. IMPERIAL REPTILES & EXOTICS; IMPERIAL REPTILES & EXOTICS. <https://imperialreptiles.com/blogs/care-sheets/poison-dart-frog-care-sheet>

Stills, C. (2022, June 2). *The True Poison-Dart Frog: The Golden Poison Frog (Phyllobates terribilis) - The Reptile Room*. The Reptile Room; The Reptile Room.
https://thereptileroom.net/phyllobates-terribilis-care-sheet/#Basic_Facts_About_Phyllobates_terribilis_In_Captivity