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Breeding *Betta splendens*

by ALEXANDER A. PRIEST

Many books on breeding the “Siamese Fighting Fish” (*Betta splendens*) imply you need only put two fish together and, *voilà*, you have babies—not so, as many have learned. This article highlights basics you need to know for breeding bubble-nesting bettas.

Nutrition: A high protein diet is important. If you can get disease- and parasite-free live or frozen worms, that’s great; but any high quality floating food will suffice. Avoid foods whose first ingredients listed are “fish meal,” “fish by-products,” plants, or grains (wheat, rice, etc.).

Conditioning: Keep the male and female separate, but able to see each other. This can be accomplished by putting them in the same tank separated by a glass divider, or with the female in a clear container (a hurricane lamp sleeve or jar) whose top opens above the waterline.

Aquascaping: Bare-bottom is best. The male puts the eggs he squeezes from the female (and later, immature fry) into the bubble-nest. Substrate

Timing: When should you release the female? Females who bulge slightly indicate they have ripe eggs. Darker colored females also show vertical body stripes as a sign of readiness. Males show their readiness by building bubble-nests and by trying to get at the female.

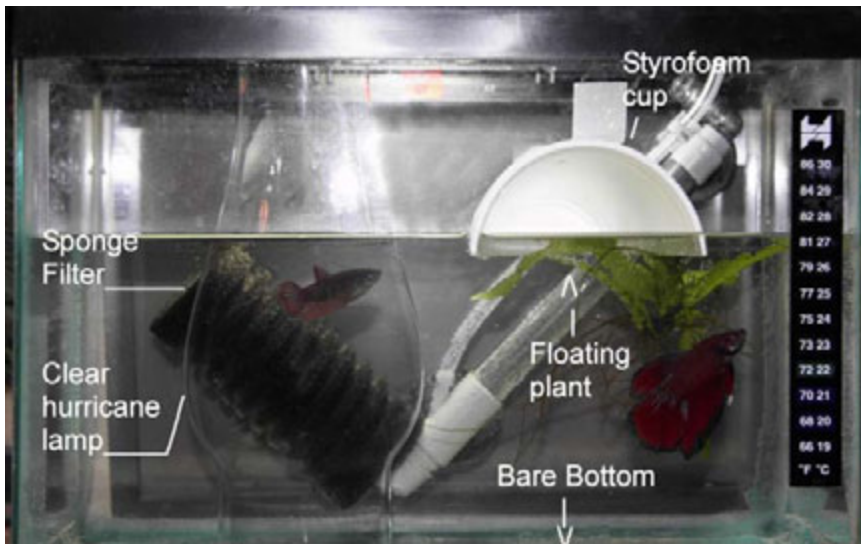
Environment: I’ve always found a 2.5 or 5 gallon tank to be best. Start the sponge filter in the tank where you are conditioning the adults (better yet, use a mature sponge from another tank). Float the Styrofoam™ cup half on the water (or tape it to the glass).

While some “wild” bubble-nesting *Betta* species require special water parameters (usually soft, acidic water), *Betta splendens* does fine in almost any not-too-extreme range of water hardness and acidity. They breed more readily in warmer water, so try to maintain a temperature of about 80°F.

Monitoring: Spawning almost always results in torn fins and bites. If either fish appears unduly

distressed (yes, females can and will kill males who they feel are not sufficiently responsive), remove that fish. Wait until it heals before trying again.

After a successful spawning, remove the female (if she tries to eat the eggs, the male will attack her). Remove the male once the fry are swimming horizontally.



makes it harder for him to find them. Plants are optional (and beneficial), with floating plants preferred.

Caves, driftwood, or rockwork help females hide from overly aggressive males.

A Styrofoam™ cup cut in half will assist males in anchoring bubble-nests.

Filtration: A sponge filter with moderate airflow will not disturb bubble-nests. The sponge also hosts infusoria as first food for newly hatched fry.

Fry Care: Usually by their second day of swimming, the fry have used up their yoke sacs and should be fed microworms, newly hatched brineshrimp, and finely ground flake food.

One spawning can produce 300-500 eggs, so be prepared!

