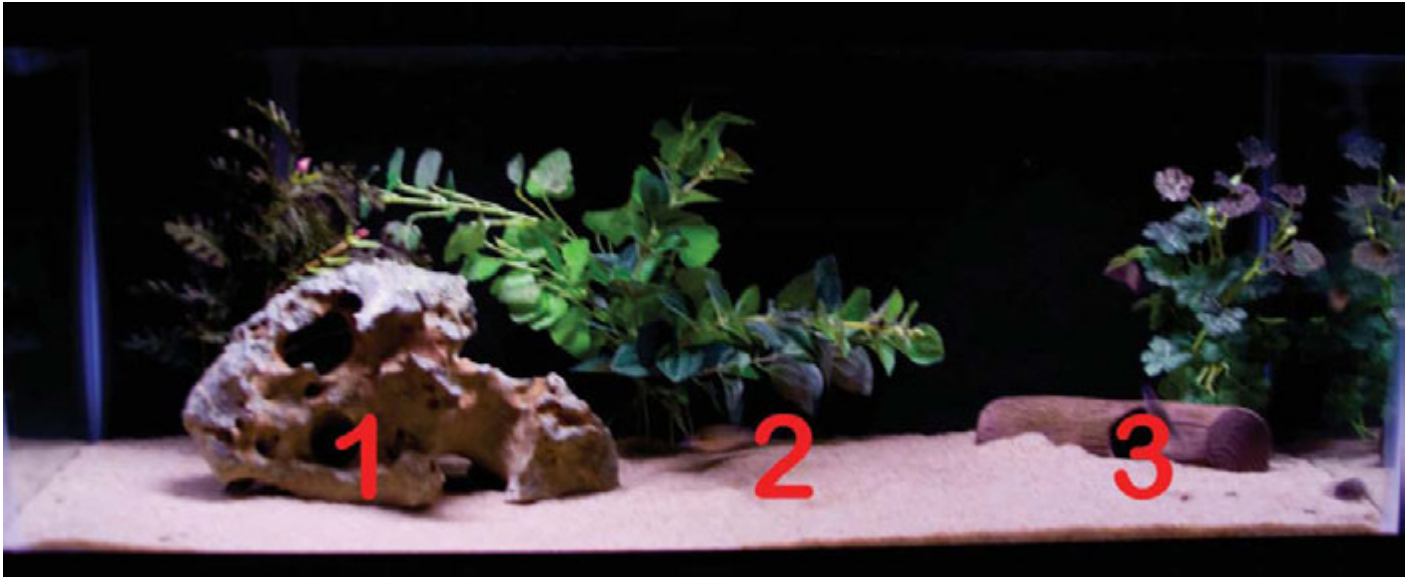


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This image shows the overall tank view of a 20 gallon long. I apply the same ideology to aquaria of other dimensions as well. I will to illustrate the three zones that form my rheophilic environment.

Setting up a Rheophilic Tank

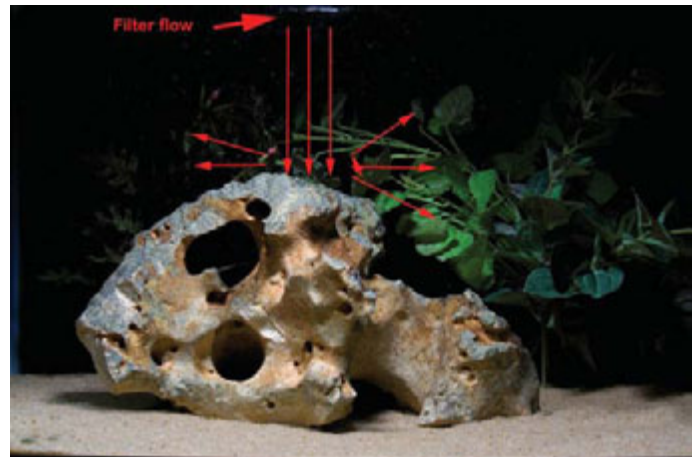
Dave Hansen

This article first appeared in the Buntbarsche Bulletin, August, 2009.

There is a misconception that riverine fish need to live in whirlpool-like conditions to simulate their natural environment. This is an incorrect assumption and recreating that environment can lead to some unhappy cichlids. Their body shapes are designed to keep them out of the fast flowing water. I would like to share a setup that I have used for quite some time and has lead to success in raising and breeding rheophilic cichlids.

The key to a successful setup is placement of the filtration and aquascaping design. While rapidly moving current is not a requirement, the need to have well oxygenated water certainly is. I accomplish this goal by using a filter with a higher flow rate than required for the tank size. I prefer Aqua Clear® brands because of the large volume of water they move. This may seem contradictory of my earlier statement about excessive water flow in the tank. To offset the increase in flow and keep substrate and plants from blowing all over the aquarium, I place a large rock under the outflow. This functions as a diffuser and spreads the surge

throughout the tank without consuming the environment. Let's take a look at the various sections of the tank.



Zone 1: Here you can see the flow of the filter directly over the rock. There are several benefits to having an object at this location. Décor placed here hide the filter's intake tube and creates areas of seclusion for sub-dominant fish and fry.



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Zone 2: This region functions as a buffer between the rocks and breeding arena. The area allows for a breeding cichlid pair to define and defend their territory. Once fry become free swimming, this buffer zone helps protect from ambushing fish hiding in the rocks. The flow of the water over the rock is pushing these plants down from their normal up-right position.



Zone 3: This is the breeding site. I have experimented with the location of breeding logs and caves but have discovered that when given a choice, the pair will chose a location with least current. This is normally a spot farthest away from the filter outflow. The plant in the corner provides a comfortable position for the parent not in the cave to watch over the entire area without feeling exposed.

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The results!

In conclusion, this is a setup that has worked very well for me. Rheophilic cichlids are among my favorite group of fish. I have experimented with numerous aquatic designs attempting to find one that would offer repeated success. I have been fortunate to spawn several species of *Steatocranus*, *Teleogramma brichardi*, *Orthochromis stormsi*, and *Gobiocichla wonderi* with this recipe. These charming and entertaining fish deserve to have a prominent exhibit in everyone's collection. I hope this simple setup will inspire you to add them to yours!

