

AMAZON TREE BOA CARE GUIDE

Corallus hortulanus — Common Tree Boa / Garden Tree Boa

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Amazon tree boas are beautiful, arboreal, and built to strike at anything that moves near them — including you. This species is renowned for its aggression. Most individuals range from defensive to very defensive, they have a long striking reach, and they tend to aim for the face. They are stunning animals and rewarding to keep, but they are not beginner snakes. Plan accordingly.



NATURAL HISTORY & DESCRIPTION

- Found throughout South American rainforests — highly arboreal, preferring to drape on branches and move between tree limbs
- Also common in fruit orchards caused by deforestation — most captive specimens originate from Colombia and Suriname
- Medium-sized nocturnal snake reaching 5–7 feet in length with a slender body — despite their length, they weigh only 400–800 grams and are slow growers
- Built to eat avian prey: large triangular heads, long teeth, and large bulging eyes. These features are functional, not decorative.
- Lifespan of 20+ years — a long-term commitment to a species that will maintain its defensive habits throughout

Color phases:

- Garden phase: blacks, browns, and greys
- Colored phase: reds, oranges, and yellows
- Each phase can be patternless, speckled, banded, or saddled — morphs available include candy canes, tigers, leopards, Halloweens, and paradoxes



HOUSING & ENCLOSURE

- Amazons are arboreal — enclosure height matters as much as floor space. The height should be at least **2/3 of the snake's body length**.
- Specialty arboreal cages (such as Neodesha Vision cages) are ideal — aquariums work temporarily but are harder to maintain at consistent temperature and humidity
- Investing in a purpose-built arboreal enclosure is strongly recommended — it is what will be needed for the animal's entire life

Life Stage	Recommended Enclosure
Neonate	10-gallon aquarium or Rubbermaid container — the latter holds humidity better and helps neonates feel secure
Adult	30–50 gallon equivalent, or specialty arboreal cage at least 32" L × 32" H × 24" D — bigger is always better

- Light cycle: 12 hours daylight / 12 hours night — required even for nocturnal species to support normal behavior
- A ReptiSun 5.0 UVB during daylight hours is not required but does not hurt — it mimics natural daylight and promotes natural behaviors
- A 15-watt incandescent bulb can supplement daylight lighting



SUBSTRATE

Substrate	Pros	Cons / Notes
Newspaper	Inexpensive, easy to clean, allows visual inspection of feces	Does not hold humidity well, unattractive
Paper towels	Inexpensive, cleaner-looking than newspaper	Breaks apart when saturated — change daily
Aspen	Holds humidity well, aesthetically pleasing, no respiratory irritation	Spot clean daily; full change weekly; watch for mold under water dish

- Avoid pine and cedar — aromatic oils irritate the respiratory tract
- Particulate substrates (like aspen) can be ingested during feeding — Amazons eat upside-down from branches so this risk is lower than with ground feeders, but use a separate feeding container without substrate as a precaution



TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Zone / Parameter	Target
Ambient enclosure temperature	75–88°F — preferred zone 80–82°F at mid-enclosure
Lower level of enclosure	High to mid 70s°F
Gravid female basking temperature	Up to 90–92°F — provide access but don't force it
Nighttime temperature	75–77°F
Humidity	60–80% — use the higher end during shedding

- Use a ceramic heat emitter or moonlight bulb for nighttime heating — this species is nocturnal and should not be disturbed by visible light at night
- Radiant heat panels are an effective alternative — ensure the snake **cannot make direct contact** with them
- Daily misting is required for humidity — a humidifier or reptile fogger attached to a hygrometer is the most reliable system
- Misting also allows the snake to drink droplets off its body — especially important for imported individuals reluctant to explore for the water dish
- A hygrometer is required for proper humidity monitoring — guessing is not monitoring



CAGE ACCESSORIES

- Horizontal perches of varying widths are essential — the smallest branch should be at least as thick as the snake's body
- Amazons prefer “V”-shaped branch configurations over single horizontal drape branches — this allows proper perching posture
- Include some perches at slight angles to encourage exercise, alongside true horizontal perches
- Use varied hardwoods — avoid pine and cedar due to respiratory-irritating aromatic oils. Cork board is excellent: durable and highly mold-resistant.
- Ground hides are required: half a flower pot, a wooden box with an access hole, or a large upturned cat litter box with an entry hole
- Arboreal hides are also required: a wooden box with entry hole or a corner shelf large enough for the snake to lay on, covered with foliage
- Plants can be fake or real — fake plants are easier to clean and maintain. A plastic coated mesh basket filled with moss and artificial leaves makes an excellent combined hide and foliage feature.



FEEDING

- Offer all prey during evening hours — Amazons are nocturnal hunters and will be most receptive after dark
- Prey size should be no larger than the width of the snake's head — adult rodents are nutritionally preferred over juveniles when size permits
- Feed again once the snake has defecated and the “lump” from the previous meal has disappeared — soaking a few days after feeding helps encourage defecation
- Avoid feeding obese prey animals — snakes with limited exercise opportunity can become obese

Age / Size	Frequency	Prey
Neonate to 1–2 years	Weekly	Pinkies → fuzzies as soon as size allows (better nutrition)
1+ year (if size allows)	Every 1–2 weeks	Small mice
Adult	Every 2 weeks	Medium to large mice

Converting imported snakes to rodents:

- Young imported snakes (primary diet: frogs and lizards) can often be tempted with rodents by rubbing the rodent's body on a previously frozen/thawed frog
- Adults (primary diet: avian prey) can be introduced to mammalian prey by wetting the mouse and rolling it in natural feathers (not dyed craft store feathers) — feathers can often be sourced from a local butcher
- Converting younger imported snakes is generally easier than converting adults — start early if possible



HANDLING

Amazon tree boas are renowned for their aggression. Most are defensive to very aggressive, have a long striking range, and will bite readily. They tend to strike at the face. This is not a handling-focused species — they are best experienced as display animals. Approach every interaction with appropriate caution.

- Use a snake hook for all initial approaches — hooks allow safe maneuvering from outside striking distance
- Leather gloves are recommended for additional protection during handling

- For highly aggressive individuals, snake tongs are the appropriate tool — ask an experienced keeper or veterinary staff for demonstration
- Daily handling from a young age helps reduce some aggression over time but will not eliminate it in all individuals
- Wild-caught and imported snakes are generally more aggressive than domestically bred animals — allow imported snakes several weeks to settle before attempting handling
- Domestically bred Amazons should still be given approximately one week to acclimate before handling begins
- Amazons are visualization snakes more than tactile snakes — watching them thrive in a well-designed enclosure is the primary rewarding experience with this species



VETERINARY CARE

- Take your new Amazon tree boa to a reptile veterinarian for a health exam and parasite testing before handling becomes routine
- Annual wellness exams are recommended — schedule regular visits to screen for parasites and early signs of disease
- Imported animals carry a particularly high parasite burden — fecal testing at acquisition is essential

Questions? We've heard weirder ones. Call us.

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