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SNAKES

Checkered Garter Snake

Thamnophis marcianus

Thamnophis marcianus is a medium-sized, mainly diurnal garter snake with a black checkerboard pattern on a green to olive-brown back. It lives in the south-western United States, Mexico and Central America, almost always near water, and grows to 45-105 cm. It is hardy and can be kept on thawed mice, but it is a selective feeder, may eat other snakes of its own species and escapes through the smallest gaps.

Family: Colubridae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**45-105 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**30-120 g**
Lifespan	**7-10 years**
Active	**By day and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and semi-aquatic**
Habitat	**Semi-desert, savanna and wetland**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**100 × 50 × 50 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**23-27 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-24 °C**
Humidity	**35-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 2
Winter rest	**12-15 °C** 8-16 weeks
Diet	**Vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Live-bearing**
Sexually mature	**18-24 months**
Litter size	**6-35 young**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Gestation	**80-105 days**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little species-specific knowledge exists on the care of *Thamnophis marcianus*.
TEMPERATURE	There must be a clear temperature gradient. The basking spot should be 29-32 °C measured on the surface, the cool end 23-27 °C and the night 18-24 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The humidity should be 35-60 %, highest at the cool end and at night. The enclosure should not be wet, because constant damp causes blisters on the belly and fungal infections.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Thamnophis marcianus* is diurnal and thrives in strong daylight. UVB is not strictly necessary, but it is recommended and often makes the snake more active.
FEEDING	In the wild *Thamnophis marcianus* eats frogs, toads, tadpoles, small fish and earthworms.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Thamnophis marcianus* is quick and alert and usually becomes calm if it is handled regularly from a young age. Let new animals settle in for about two weeks, and only begin handling them when they are feeding reliably.
NATIVE RANGE	United States, Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.