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POISON DART FROGS

Golden Poison Frog

Phyllobates terribilis

Phyllobates terribilis is the largest of the poison frogs, 4-5 cm, and in the wild one of the most toxic animals known. It lives only in a small patch of rainforest on Colombia's Pacific coast. Captive-bred animals are practically non-toxic, bold and always on show, and the species has become one of the most commonly kept poison frogs in the hobby.

Family: Dendrobatidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**4-5 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**8-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Skin toxins in the wild	**Strong**
Skin toxins in captivity	**None** Captive-bred animals. Wild-caught animals can keep their toxins for a long time
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 50 × 50 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**21-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-21 °C**
Humidity	**70-100%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-2 cm
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Insects and small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles carried to water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Sexually mature	**16-20 months**
Eggs per clutch	**10-30**
Hatching	**10-25 days** at 22-24 °C
Larval period	**30-60 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Complete diet**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs and carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
IUCN	**Endangered (EN)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

A pair of *Phyllobates terribilis* needs a terrarium of at least 50 × 50 × 50 cm, preferably 60 cm in all dimensions, and 60 × 50 × 80 cm or 80 × 50 × 80 cm for groups of 5-10 animals.

TEMPERATURE

Figures vary: 16-27 °C with around 21-24 °C as ideal, 18-24 °C during the day and down to 16 °C at night and never above 27 °C, or 22-24 °C down at the floor and 30-32 °C in the highest, most exposed zones under a small spot of, for example, 35 W, but not above 30 °C in the whole terrarium.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Humidity should be high, 70-100 %, but the floor must not become boggy. A rain system is the easiest, for example with three mistings a day of 20-60 seconds, depending on the nozzles.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Provide one or more small water dishes with about 2 cm of water, for example saucers or halved Brazil nut shells, which the animals can easily climb out of.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The light is first and foremost for the plants. Fluorescent tubes or LED bars for about 12 hours a day are enough, and the day length may vary slightly over the year.

FEEDING

Phyllobates terribilis takes larger prey than most poison frogs. In the wild ants are the main food, but it takes many kinds of small arthropods.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Phyllobates terribilis is diurnal, bold and inquisitive and is out on show most of the day with a short break in the middle of the day. The males call with a soft, bird-like trill, especially after misting.

NATIVE RANGE

Colombia.

The full guide with map and updates: herpy.org/pilegiftfroer/phyllobates-terribilis