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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Marginated Tortoise

Testudo marginata

Testudo marginata is Europe's largest tortoise, a black and yellow mountain dweller from Greece with an elongated shell that flares like a bell at the rear. The shell reaches 25-40 cm in length, the animal can live for more than 50 years, and it belongs outdoors in the summer half of the year, feeds on wild herbs and grasses and hibernates.

Family: Testudinidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**25-40 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**50-70 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert, rocky terrain and temperate woodland and meadow**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**240 × 120 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-29 °C**
Basking spot	**35-38 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**4-6 °C** 8-16 weeks
Diet	**Plants**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3-15 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-3**
Incubation	**55-85 days** at 28-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Testudo marginata is not an animal for a closed terrarium. In the summer half of the year it must live in a sunny, well-drained outdoor enclosure of at least 10 m² per adult tortoise, and a pair or trio needs about 25 m².

TEMPERATURE

Outdoors, *Testudo marginata* must be able to warm up to at least 30 °C and seek shade when it gets too hot. Indoors the room must be 22-29 °C by day and the basking spot under the heat lamp 35-38 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The species comes from a dry landscape, but needs moderate humidity, especially while it is growing. Juveniles need about 70 % and a humid hide with dampened soil or moss, while adults are kept at 50-70 %.

LIGHTING AND UVB

T. marginata is diurnal and needs UVB to produce vitamin D3 when it is not in direct sunshine. The best is unfiltered sunlight, which in the summer half of the year provides all the UVB the animal needs.

FEEDING

T. marginata is herbivorous, and the diet must be high in fibre, low in protein, low in sugar and rich in calcium.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species is calm and well balanced, but not a pet to be picked up. The animal learns to know its keeper and readily comes when there is food. Handle it only when necessary, and always support the plastron.

NATIVE RANGE

Greece and Albania.