

# Kid's Korner

## Aquariums Teach Kids Life Cycles Through 4-H Club

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LITITZ (Lancaster Co.) —

Eight-year-old Brian Hollingsworth pointed to a fish in his aquarium and said, "It's a neat fish. It's fast. I like it the best."

The fish, called a Kukli Loach, lay motionless in the bottom of the tank until the water was slightly agitated. In a flash, the fish darted, zoomed, and swerved around the plants in the water.

Names like Albine Catfish and Cardinal Tetra easily roll off Brian's tongue. He learned the names of tropical fish because he joined a 4-H aquatic science program.

Don't let that big name scare you. It's actually just taking care of fish in a bowl or aquarium. It's a neat project to learn responsibility and have fun. The project doesn't need to cost a lot of money. Some kids have only one or two goldfish while others have large aquariums filled with tropical fish.

Brian explained that tropical fish and goldfish are called clean water fish while salt water fish need salt water in which to live. Tropical fish, since they originate in the tropical regions, need warmer water than gold fish.

Brian also has a Siamese Fighting Fish. He said, "I only have one because if I had two males, the fish would fight until one dies."

If Brian holds a mirror against the tank, the Siamese fish thinks it is another fish and spreads its purple and red gills, prepared to fight.

To begin his project, Brian went to a store called That Fish Place. He bought a small aquarium, gravel, rocks, sticks, plants, a filter and an air pump.

With the help of his father, who had raised fish when he was younger, Brian chose several varieties of fish. He only needs to feed the fish once a day.

The aquarium is set up in his bedroom so that Brian can see them as soon as he wakes up in the morning.

"I never forget to feed them," Brian said.

Occasionally, Brian needs to check the water's pH level. This shows the acidity or alkalinity of the water. Brian has a test kit that he has learned to use himself to measure the pH level. If the pH is wrong, he adds a few drops of a liquid from a specially marked bottle. It colors the water for a few hours, then he checks the level again until it is neutral.

Brian said, "You should change 1/4 of the water in the tank every two weeks."

According to Brian, it is "real easy" to learn fish care. As part of his 4-H project, he has a booklet that explains everything he needs to know about caring for fish. The booklet was written by Paul Spiece who formerly hosted his own television show called "From Guppies to Groupers."

Brian needs to keep records of his fish such as when he purchased them, how much they cost compared to those at other stores and other basic information. If the fish die, Brian writes down when they died and why. Brian said fish usually die because the water isn't the right pH or temperature or maybe the fish are old.

The booklet has lots of interesting information about fish. For example, Brian learned that there are 22,000 different fish in the world.

The purpose of the 4-H club is to teach kids how to set up and maintain a beautiful, successful aquarium. Participants learn that different fish have different habits. The fish basically need a proper diet and water.

Fish raising is considered the second largest hobby in the U.S. Photography rates first, but some years, the popularity of raising fish hits the number one spot.

According to Zoann Parker, Lancaster County 4-H extension agent, the project teaches environmental science principals and helps youngsters understand the cycle of life.



Brian Hollingsworth thinks fish are really neat. He has joined the 4-H aquatic science club, which teaches him how to have a successful, beautiful aquarium.

"An aquarium is the perfect life cycle," she said. "The plants give off oxygen for the fish, the fish give off carbon dioxide for the plant."

That Fish Place, 237 Centerville Rd., Lancaster, PA 17603, is helping with the 4-H project. The store is the largest fish store in the world. It has more than 500 varieties of fish plus all the supplies needed. The price of gold fish starts at 29 cents, but you may pay as much as \$300 for a Purple Tang fish. It is a brilliant purple fish with a yellow tail. The Purple Tang's natural home is the Red Sea.

That Fish Place offers a 10 percent discount to 4-H'ers who participate in the project. If you do not live near the store, you may call the toll free number 1 800 733-3829 and request a free catalogue. That Fish Place ships over the world. Make sure you tell them, you read

about the 4-H project through this article; otherwise, you will need to pay \$2 for the catalogue.

This is the first year for the aquatic science project. The participants can complete their record

books with the help of their parents until a club is formed in the area.

For more information on the 4-H club, contact your local Penn State Extension office or call Zoann Parker at (717) 394-6851



Did you know that there are 22,000 varieties of fish in the world? Brian Hollingsworth studies his 4-H aquatic science booklet to discover interesting facts about fish.



Brian tells his sister, Carol, 10, about the Siamese Fighting Fish that will fight another male until he dies.

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