



The Cichlid Chronicles



Aquascaping



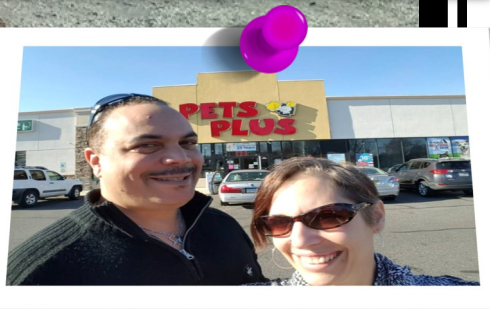
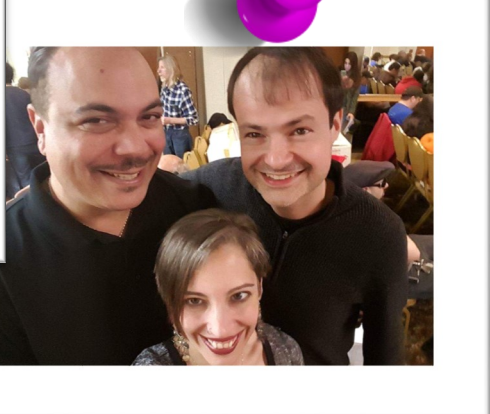
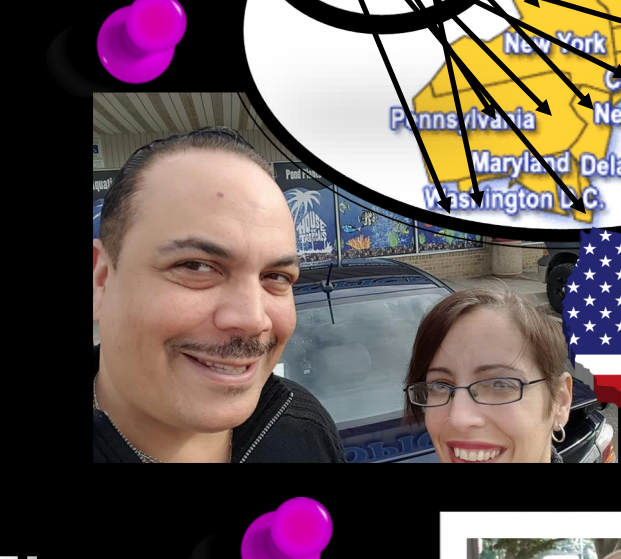
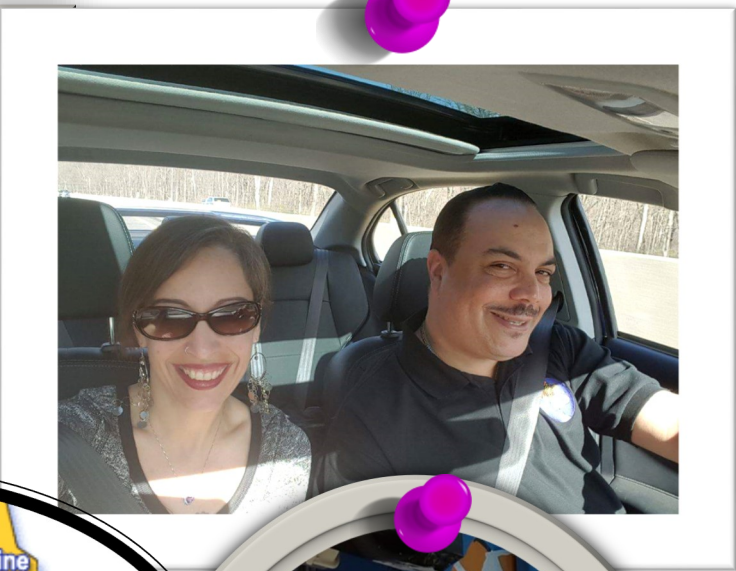
It is with great pleasure that **The Cichlid Chronicles** has returned bigger and better than ever. After a much needed hiatus from the rigors of running a tropical fish club. I have returned happier, stronger and more energized for this wonderful hobby. Sometimes it's important to take a break, especially when the hobby you love feels more like a job than an enjoyable moment. I want to personally thank **Dwayne Walker** for taking over the role of The Cichlid Club of York PA President and allowing me to take a much needed break. Not only has Dwayne taken over the position of CCY President but he has managed to improve the club in many ways I couldn't. Add to it that he along with the rest of the CCY board have made our September Clash event even bigger and better! Make sure you get registered TODAY for this 3 day event. Also I would like to thank Tom Gillooly for pushing me to restart the Chronicles. His outcry for the publication (along with others) has been inspirational. Last but certainly not least I would like to thank my "Queen" Elizabeth for her support and friendship during some tough times. We have really made the most of every moment in this hobby and our love for the hobby became a love for one another. We are the King and Queen of our own happiness (something we read in a book one evening), and that's where the title of King and Queen cichlids originated from. And nothing makes us happier than talking, promoting and enjoy the wonderful world of cichlids. - Nuff said!

This issue is jam packed with articles from Rachel O'Leary, Judith Weinberg, William Peragine, Elizabeth and myself. We hope you enjoy this issue and all those to follow. You can also check us out on youtube where we have our own King and Queen cichlid videos, as well as kingandqueencichlids.com

As always we thank everyone for taking the time and reading this publication. We have some amazing articles coming next month so be sure to stay tuned. Next page is a splash page of some of our travels. Enjoy!

- *Scott McLaughlin*





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I Hated Cichlids!!



By William Chance Peragine



I used to hate cichlids. I thought they were big, stupid, aggressive fish who would prefer to kill each other rather than get along in my nicely aquascaped, planted tanks. To compound the issue, they would dig up plants, move rocks, and even eat my freaking plants. The Amphilophus genus is, in my humble opinion, the king of all jerk cichlids. You know that big red hump headed idiot that slams his face into the glass when you near the tank?

-Yeah, those fish. They're real charmers. -

I still remember when I first decided I would re-visit keeping a freshwater tank. I used to keep freshwater fish when I was young, but as an adult, I moved into keeping saltwater species. Eventually my career took priority and I was on the road more often than home. I decided I needed to give up keeping fish all together. A few years later, my life settled down and my girlfriend and I decided to get a small freshwater tank for fun. We had a killer tank; it was a 15 gallon column tank, decked out with this awesome neon pink/green/yellow gravel that we added a bunch of black gravel to. We then switched gears and went the complete OPPOSITE direction, trying to make the tank look all natural with live plants, driftwood, and rocks. It was like our own little slice of disco in nature and we loved it.

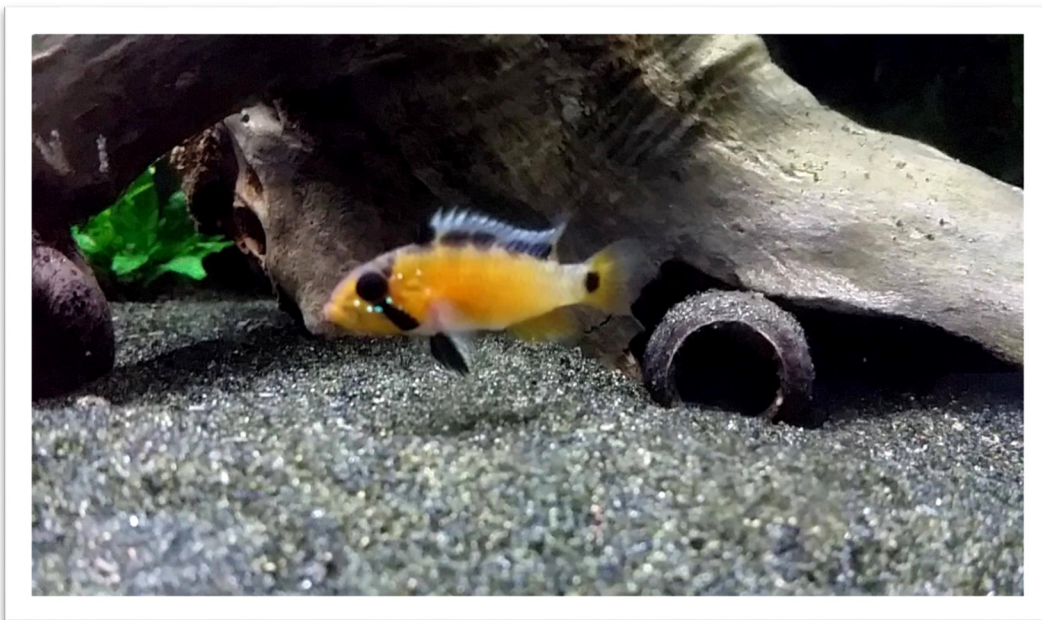
We started going to fish stores around Philadelphia, looking for some new, cool looking fish to put in our tank. The hunt for a pretty, eye-catching freshwater fish was on. As we cruised through the store, there was always one aisle I would steer my girlfriend away from the cichlids. I would say, "Look sweetie, there is no point going down there. Those are the a**hole fish." She would say, "But they are really colorful and pretty!" I'd counter with, "Yes, they are pretty, but they are all huge freaking jerks. We are not getting cichlids." The search went on for many months until I came across pictures of Apistos. I started doing some research and although it pains me to admit, I was wrong!

Not “ALL” cichlids are jerks! The genus *Apistogramma* is known for its intelligence and personable nature. Imagine my girlfriend’s surprise when I told her I wanted to get a pair of dwarf cichlids! She immediately quoted my “all cichlids are a**holes” lecture. Yeah, she never let me forget that. In



the end, I still got my Apistos though, a beautiful pair of triple reds. *Apistogramma* checked off all the boxes on my list; Calm demeanor, check; doesn’t eat plants, check; small size, does well with other fish, doesn’t dig very much, interesting behavior, colorful, check check check check and check!

Apistogramma are excellent fish for a community tank. They stand out as a very strong center piece for any tank, with their bold colors and striking fins. My standard recommendation is to get only one male per tank, and if you want more Apistos, add a female or two.



I really see no reason to add more and your fish will be less stressed this way. If you have a large enough tank (at least 4 foot by 1 foot), you can mix two males. Watch them defend their territory from each other and strut their stuff for the ladies!



In this same size tank, you can also attempt an all-male fraternity type tank; however I only recommend this to the more experienced Apisto keeper. The males will establish a hierarchy and hopefully one single fish will not be constantly bullied. It is important to include enough males, around five, in this type of tank. Attention should be given to ensure that all males are properly cared for and fed.

Despite how great they are most fish keepers like to keep a variety of fish in their tanks. This leads to another great thing about Apistos; they prefer to eat small crustaceans and insect larvae, not other fish (even small ones)! It is important to note the use of the word PREFER; some individuals will eat other fish, but many do not. I have noticed that breeding males and females generally do not ever eat fish. They even seem to think twice before going after small prey.

Males from an all-male tank are a different story though. They will gladly eat anything they consider prey. Fish newly introduced to the aquarium are at the most risk. The male Apistos will take advantage of those first seconds of confusion and quickly gobble up the new fish. If the new fish manage to survive those first few moments, they have a pretty good chance of survival and thrive in the community tank, living side-by-side with your Apistos. Typically, the Apistos will realize they move slower than the other fish species and quickly lose interest trying to catch them .

I have a group of males that will eat any fish I introduce into the tank within the first few seconds, but once the new fish gain their bearings, my Apistos never glance their way again. My advice is to add fish with care. I suggest rearranging the décor right before introducing the new fish. This will temporarily confuse the Apistos, giving the new fish an even playing field. Once you get some nice tetras or other suitable tank mates in, you normally have nothing to worry about. Each fish is an individual though, so nothing is guaranteed. I do feel the need to once again urge you to keep one male per tank, with perhaps a female or two if you want to breed. A single lone male is perfectly fine in a community tank. Adding more males only draws the focus away from each individual's beauty.

A planted tank is where your Apistos can truly shine. I would like to give a note of caution though. If you are planning on dosing with fertilizers, a tank strain of Apistogramma is best. If you are more interested in rare, and generally wild caught species, you should consider a low tech tank with soft water. Wild caught fish tend to be more susceptible to high TDS, salts, minerals, and other parameters necessary for medium to high tech planted tanks. In either instance, planted tanks are ideal for Apistos. Planted tanks typically have a low KH, which Apistos thrive in. The pH of a planted tank should be kept fairly low; guess who also loves low pH water? Dense vegetation provides excellent cover for Apistos, allowing them to feel comfortable and display their colors to their full potential. With plentiful vegetation comes the advantage of numerous hiding places, which will make your Apistos more adventurous. Knowing you can escape death by diving into the plants at any time gives a lot for the confidence of these little fish. The common inhabitants to planted tanks, tetra, discus, angel fish and shrimp will all do well, when kept with Apistos.



Young shrimp will likely be eaten by Apistos, but adult shrimp are usually too large for them and will be left alone.

Many types of cichlids can be quite detrimental to a planted tank for a few reasons.



Digging can be a frustrating experience for any planted tank keeper. Coming home every day to see all your plants floating around the tank can make you want to toss your fish right out the window. I won't try to lie to you here; when you have a freshly planted tank where the roots have not taken hold yet, Apistos do sometimes jar them loose. Apistos do enjoy sifting the sand and will move around the top layer, but they do not dig into it. Once your plants have a bit of a root system built, you will have nothing to worry about. What can be even more devastating to your plants is some cichlids have a taste for plants! Imagine going out and spending 50 to 100 bucks on plants, then getting them home and spending hours planting them all meticulously. Now you lay your head down for the night and when you wake it looks like someone ran every plant through a paper shredder. That's what it's like to have rift lake cichlids! (notice the use of rift lake, and not African. There is a lot more than just mbuna in Africa!) Not to worry though, Apistos prefer the taste of baby shrimp over plants any day. You won't come home to find a massive plant homicide in your tank. Last but certainly not least, Apistos are actually quite well adapted to low oxygen levels in their water. In the wild they are often found in stagnant pools with little flow or surface turbulence to oxygenate the water, and therefore they adapt quickly to the high carbon dioxide conditions most planted tanks are kept in. This doesn't mean they don't need any oxygen, they do not have the labyrinth organ as Anabantoids do, but they can adapt to lower levels easily.

As you can see Apistos make a great choice for both the casual fish keeper wanting a nice community tank and the serious fish keeper looking to try and keep many different species in a multiple tank breeding setup. Their small maximum size makes having multiple tanks far easier and less expensive, but they still retain that awesome personality and sense of individuality you expect from cichlids. So where do you begin? An excellent and hardy choice is *A. cacatuoides*. The tank strain of these fish comes in several color variants, and it is the fish I always recommend for beginning Apisto keepers. There is no species better suited to begin with, but there are a few other good candidates, unlike our current presidential race! (ZING) *A. macmasteri* (often mislabeled viejita), *A. agassizii*, or *A. Borelli*. These species all have several tank raised variants, but can also be wild caught. For beginners, be sure to choose a tank variant and not a wild caught fish. They are more accustomed to life in our tanks. As a rule of thumb, I generally tell people to provide Apistos with 12 inches x 12 inches of tank floor space per fish. Be sure to create large visual barriers so an aggressive male cannot see another Apisto from the opposite side of the tank. I generally use a large piece of wood to somewhat divide the tank in half visually. At this point you are all set up and ready to go. Start breeding your Apistos and be sure to spread the love of these wonderful fish through the hobby!



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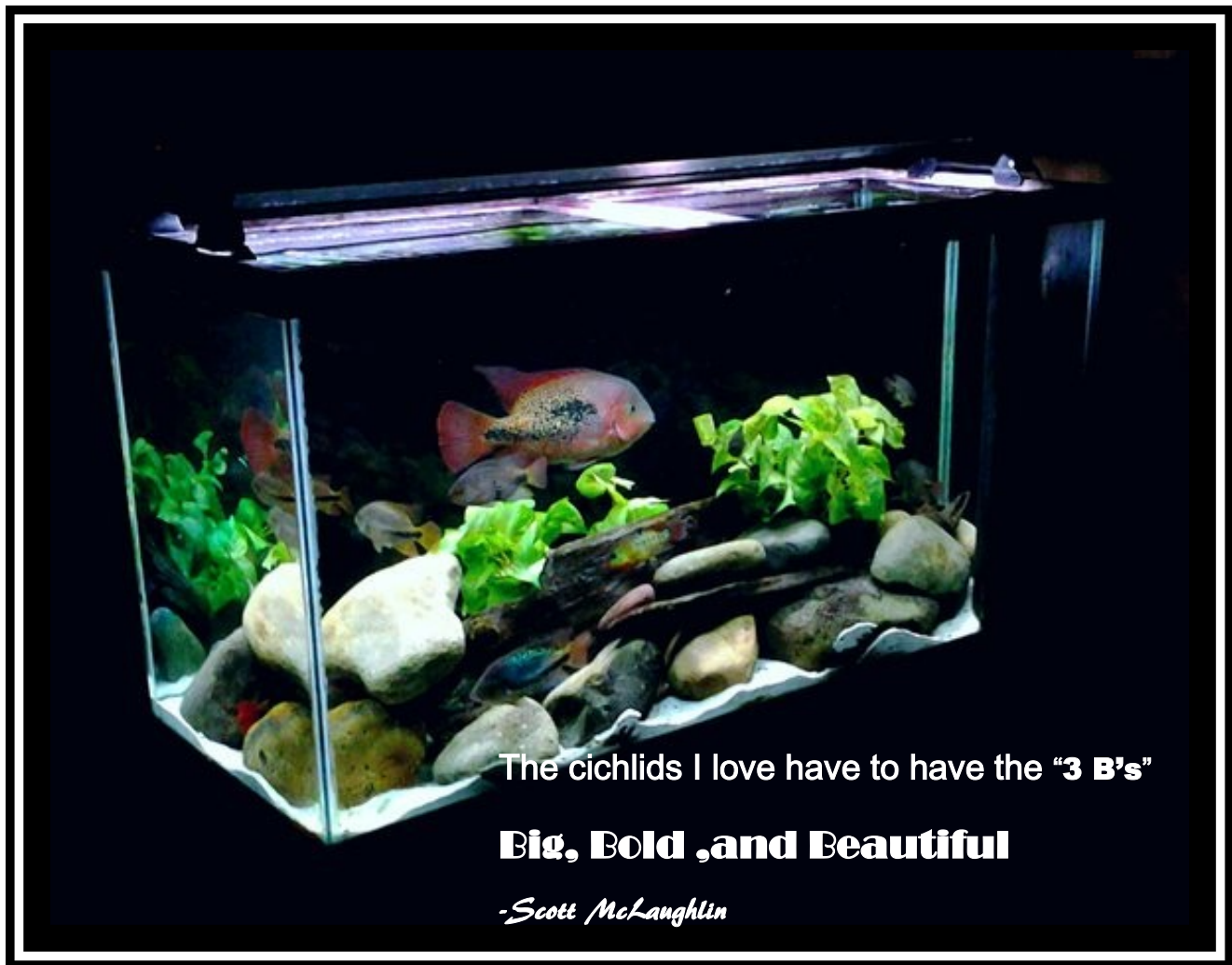
by Scott J McLaughlin

Warning!!!! Reader beware!!! The author of this article is a “bias” South and Central American “Tank Busting” cichlid keeper and his comments may be deemed offensive or prejudice by other cichlid keepers. -You’ve been warned!!!!

Now that all the legal mumbo jumbo is out the way let’s get down to business....

Rachel O’Leary hide your eyes and William Garden Peragine take cover! The gloves are coming off!! **It’s a conspiracy guys!!**

They are trying to pull the wool over our eyes!!! All these amazing shots of Discus, Angels, Apistos and all various types of dwarf cichlids... even African cichlids!!! You find them in publications, in videos even at your local pet stores! You see these beautifully aquascaped tanks- from breathtaking planted tanks to tanks with marvelous rock work that looks like they were done by the ancient Egyptians themselves. ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ— — BORING!!!! Then if you’re lucky there may be a photo, video or article with a Dovia, Umbee or similarly sized cichlid in a bare tank with sponge filter and a flower pot as décor..... Really???! Like these big beautiful beasts can’t enjoy a nicely decorated tank too!!! Now I know I know ... I know, we’ve all been told since the moment “Oscars” became popular that the big bad cichlids of South and Central America dig holes, move all substrate / gravel and devour anything green.



“ -But I am here to denounce that way of thinking!!!!”

Today we are going to discuss ways of taking those beautiful tank busters you own and putting them into an equally beautiful aquascaped tank for you to enjoy. If that wasn't enough I will show you how I aquascope my tanks on a budget. Buckle up fans– the fun begins now!!!

Now I am a “natural” aquascope lover. Which means I like to recreate my tanks into an environment that is similar to my cichlids natural habitat. Prior to setting up a tank I will spend some time researching each specific cichlid I have, where they are from, water parameters and etc. Photos of their environment is the most important factor for me and the website “The Cichlid Companion Room” (www.cichlidae.com) is a great source for all the information you need and visuals. Next is tank size. Obviously if you are keeping cichlids that are going to exceed 12” inches plus, you want to provide them with ample space. The smallest tank I have is a 55 gallon with a single *Parachromis managuensis* aka Jaguar cichlid in it. I decorated this tank with lots of wood, sand stone and sand. It's a



beautiful tank that really spotlights my jaguar cichlid. So my tank buster family, lets talk about decorating those tanks and more importantly doing it in a affordable manner. **SUBSTRATE** - Many people don't understand the importance of getting good substrate. Just the color of the substrate alone makes a huge impact on how your cichlids look. Again with the mentality that you are recreating your cichlids natural environment I would suggest using medium to light colored substrate. There are many great products at your local pet stores that you can use as substrate however I would like to suggest 2 other more affordable options. #1 **Pool filter sand**- Pool filter sand can be found at most local hardware stores (I get mine from Lowes) and you can buy a 50lb bag for under 10.00. Also pool filter sand is relatively easy to clean, just a good pre-wash before adding to your tank and you are good to go. I've used this type of sand for years with no issues, including no huge rises in PH. My tank busters seem to enjoy it, it looks great in the tank, and unless you have "Geos", your big boys won't waste their time trying to move it unless of course they are breeding. #2 **River rock**- River rock can also be found at your local hardware store or garden shop in the landscape section. Again you can get a bag of river rock for under 10.00. It looks great and with the varying size of stone from small to large (as seen in the background of this page) you can successfully recreate the look of a creek or river. I enjoy using this substrate in a large tank (150 gallons plus- 6 foot long) with multiple wave makers and the tank half full giving a "stream" look. Put some Peacock Bass *Cichla Ocellaris* in there and you have one spectacular site! Next we need driftwood! **Driftwood** is essential to my tank

design. It adds depth, contrast and the aesthetics needed to create a natural looking environment. Many times I use a large piece of driftwood as my center piece of the tank and



Photo by Lee Nuttall



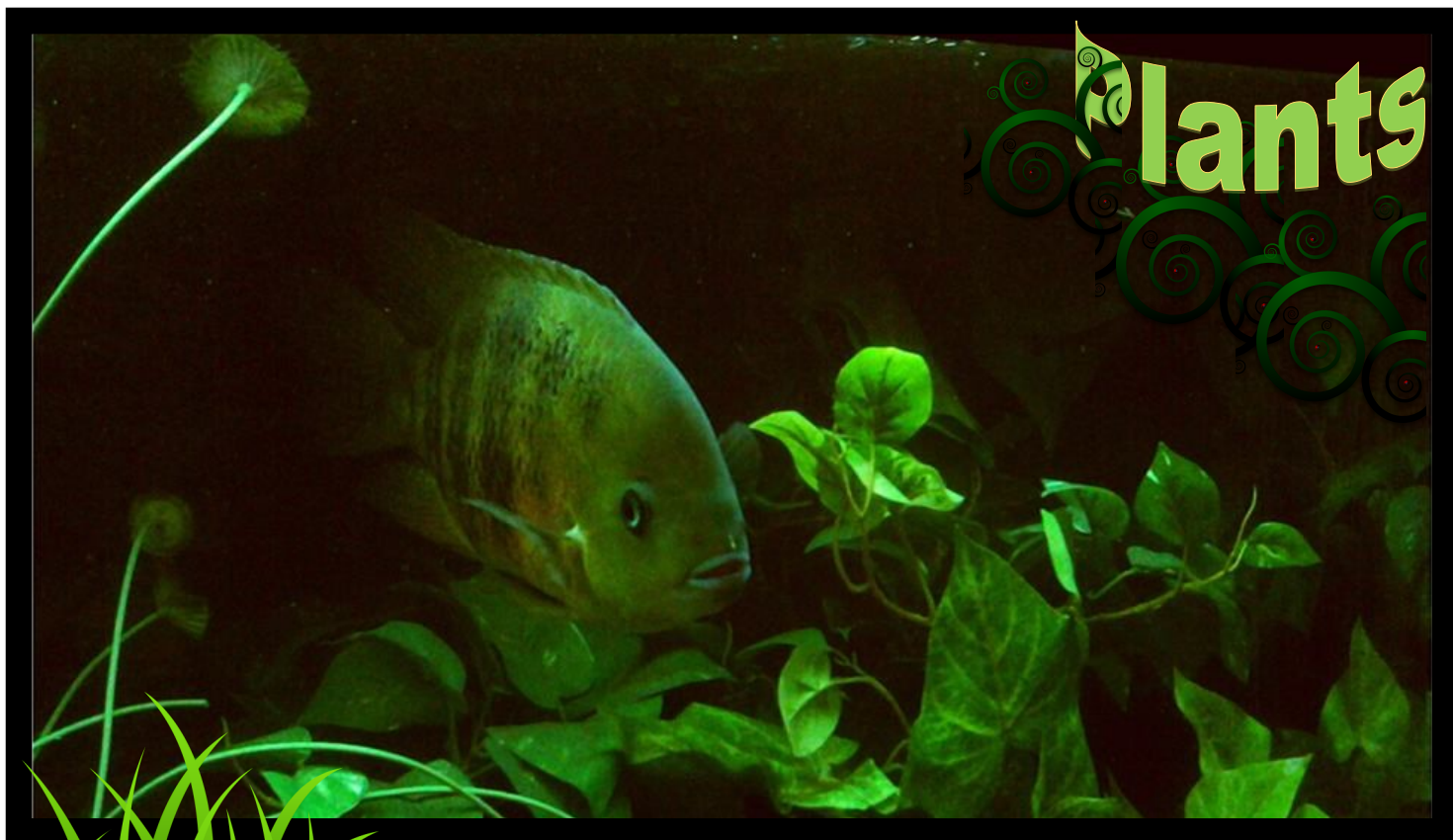
then build around it. Any of you guys keeping American cichlids should really try out putting a few pieces of driftwood in your tanks. Your tank will “pop” and your cichlids will enjoy the added hiding places. African cichlid keepers

have to be careful with driftwood as it will drop the PH in your tank and soften the water. Now driftwood is the one area I don’t skimp on. I know there are some people who collect their own wood and “treat” it usually by boiling it before adding it to their tanks.

Personally I am too fearful of pollutants and possible parasites that may be brought in with this collected wood and I prefer to purchase wood from a reputable source. I am fortunate to live within 15 minutes of Rachel O'Leary (owner of Invertebrates by Msjinkzd) who sells an incredible stock of Manzanita driftwood .

You can also find several reputable dealers online as well as most local fish clubs have driftwood for

sale at meetings or in auctions. Again just familiarize yourself with what your purchasing, ask questions and be prepared for leaching of tannins in your tank. Tannins from the driftwood will give your water a yellow to brown look. Once seen as unsightly, tannins are now becoming a popular and a desirable look to aquascaped tanks. Next– Plants!



Plants- You would think that a purist like me would only want live plants in my tank. The truth is “I do!” however the reality is it’s not reasonable. Despite my attempts to keep the hardiest plants available

such as java fern, java moss and even Anubias barteri. My tank busters continued to destroy and devour each and every plant like a cheap salad bar. Frustrated I contacted my mentor Mo Devlin who’s photos of cichlids I had admired for years. I asked Mo how he was keeping his plants so “lush” and alive in his pictures. I remember distinctly Mo laughing and saying “Scott those are artificial plants I purchased from A C Moore!” “Look real don’t they?” He said snickering... Since that day I have used nothing but artificial plants found at various hobby shops. My local “Hobby Lobby” has an amazing selection of inexpensive artificial plants and you can find just about anything you are looking for. I would recommend using the silk plants over the plastic ones. The silk plants look better and certainly move under water more like real plants.



To capture the illusion that these plants are real make sure you bury the plastic/silk stems deep in your substrate and expertly tucked behind driftwood. If you get really good at it you can make it look like the plants and driftwood are all one! I can’t tell you how many expert hobbyist I have fooled with my aqua silk plant setup.

Rocks- Last but certainly not least I begin to work my rocks and stone into my tank. Now other aquascapers may do rock work after putting their substrate in the tank, especially African cichlid keepers whose tanks are predominantly made up of rock work. However for me I have found it easier to add the larger rock work in last to help anchor much of the driftwood you have strategically placed within your tank and to hide the silk plants unsightly stems. Now there is a lot of wonderful rocks to choose from such as



Texas holy rock, lava rock, and slate. There are also some harmful rocks that you should stay away from that can leech and add metals or calcium into your water. This leeching over time can kill the very cichlids you love or change the chemistry of the water.


Collecting rocks outside in your community is certainly a fun and obviously inexpensive way to get rocks for your tank.



Photo by Lee Nuttall

But I suggest that you clean the rocks you collect by boiling them for an extended amount of time (which will kill any parasites, pollutants, or contaminants) as well as doing an acid test on them to make sure they are aquarium safe. After cleaning the rocks simply take some vinegar and drop some on a rock you collected or purchased. If the rock fizzes that's a good sign that it is made up of calcium which is bad for your water, fish and tank. I personally like **sand stone**, and have used it for years in all my tanks. I live near a rock quarry and I am able to pick up several buckets of rock for under 20 bucks! If you are not as lucky as me to have a rock quarry, most lawn and garden shops have a good stock of landscape rock for very reasonable prices. But remember to do the acid test before using. Last tip, don't fill your tank up with water until "after" the rock is added. The mass of the rock will cause your tank to overflow. Next page – Conclusion



So there you have it my fishy friends. My tips on how to make your tanks look like something straight out of the Amazon with a tank busting cichlid to bring it to life. No longer can we let these dainty and petite cichlids grace the cover of fish magazines as if large cichlids have no place in the hobby! No I say to you! Big, Bold and Beautiful cichlids deserve their day in the spotlight and their moment to shine. Jenny Craig eat your heart out! 



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Put Him on the Kitchen Counter

By- Judith Weinberg



When I first started showing cichlids, I had one stock entry, my small spot Paratilapia, Bo. I learned a lot in preparing fish for a show from him but I have picked up a lot of tricks of the trade since then.

I will tell you what you can try at home. See if it works or if you throw your hands up in despair.

I am not going into the finer points of show judging here. I am basically sticking with the area involving “deportment” or how your fish behaves in the tanks at the show and how you can prepare him ahead of time.. This is all dicey stuff because we are dealing with cichlids and they have minds of their own. The idea is to get the fish to be responsive, fins erect and attacking the glass--all in consort with the judges coming around with their magnifying glasses and flashlights. Even given your best efforts in “training” the fish at home and even if he is following your finger and flaring on command, he may decided to poop out at the show because he is cold, scared, exhausted from the trip, or just plain doesn’t feel like standing at attention.

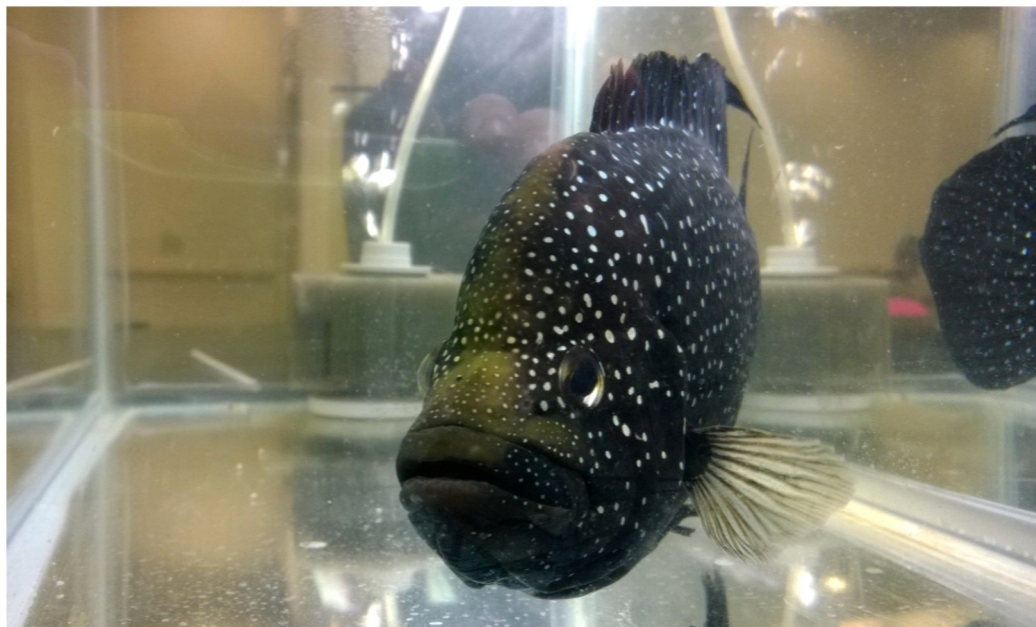


My doubtful husband, Neal, says in a mantra, “What is this fish doing here?” He is, of course, responding to my having placed a small tank on the kitchen counter in an effort to “socialize” the fish. If the fish, say a peacock, is kept on the darkened, second shelf of your fishroom,

he is not apt to want to be friendly in the light of day. My friend, Dan-ye Jennings, a fabulous fish show-woman, says she keeps her fish AS show fish, all around the kitchen and living areas to acclimate them, one to a tank.. You have to work with the fish, she said.

So, say that peacock is right by the kitchen door on your counter and sees all the comings and goings of your house. This is ideal because then you can be somewhat assured that he won't spook too badly when someone walks past his show tank. My mentor, George Goulard, said that he kept his famous firemouth, Thor, forty-four inches off the floor by the door of his store in Providence, RI. George had also trained Thor (my husband: Oh, you can't *train a fish*) to *flare on demand*. *George says that the higher up the fish is placed, the more he will feel in command of his environment.*

If you have a say where the fish is placed on the show stands, choose the upper shelf. And, if it can be arranged, have him beside his mate or a similar fish, so that he will be eager to fly at the neighboring tank. Most of all, make sure that he is hungry. Don't feed the fish for several days before the show. When you get right down to it, the desire for



food is the most reliable method of getting the fish's nose to the glass.

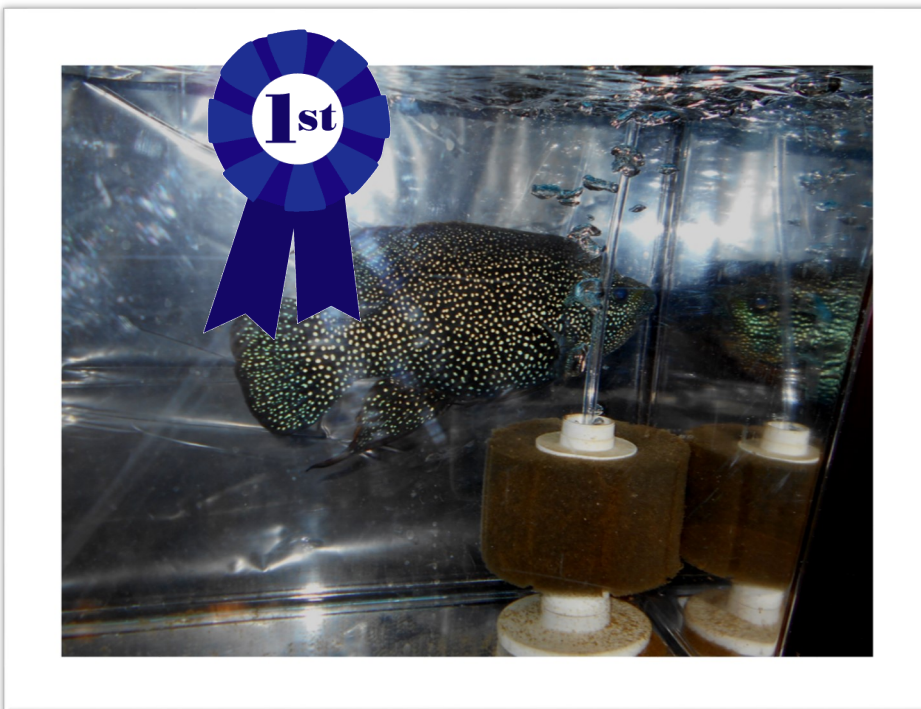
Go back to the peacock and place him on that lower shelf in the fish-room. George also counsels covering three sides of his tank so that the fish only sees out of the front of the

tank. Keep him darkened like that and at feeding time, flash him with a strong light, and he will soon be conditioned to be alert and with his nose to the glass. The hope is that he will recapitulate this behavior at the show when the judges show up with their lighted magnifiers. Once he has mastered this trick (Thor had it down like nobody's business, curses!) he is ready for the great wide open. Of course, all of this does no good if your cichlid is not in optimal condition for showing. The fish has to be perfect, because, after all, this is all boils down to a beauty contest. Neal once suggested black eyeliner for a nicked spot on Bo! Waterproof eyeliner, he said! Don't do this! Make-up is not allowed, your fish will be disqualified. A white spot or split fin is not allowed either. Sometimes a split fin can't be helped from transporting the fish. If you are lucky a small split can seal itself closed in a day or two; don't bother bringing the fish if a chunk of tail is missing, though. The shipping and packing of fish for the show is a topic for another article .

What I have done with an ornery fish, is to become his friend (or fish whisperer). With the fish always nearby, I will tantalize him with a piece of the haddock I had for dinner. I will waggle my finger at a particular fish in a tank and beckon him to me. If he responds, I reward him with a piece of krill. If you don't think this is possible, just ask my doubting Thomas of a husband. I suppose a critic would say that this is an effort in humanizing or anthropomorphizing a fish, all for effect at a show which stresses the fish, anyway. There is some merit to this, I must say.

The great cichlid king of the Midwest, Ron Georgeone, told me that he only separated a fish from his main, large, tank a week before the show. He said that for good deportment, all a fish really had to do was to be suspended mid-column in the water. This "technique" certainly worked for Ron but his fish were so very beautiful that this was all that was necessary. Others say, back to that peacock, that the best way is to keep the fish alone in his own tank and feed the hell out of him until he's as big and beautiful as he can get.

Now, none of this insures that a fish will deport well. The fish may not like the cooled atmosphere of the show room, where a heater is not allowed. He may turn white and cower behind his sponge filter for no reason at all, just because he feels like it. In these cases, Neal suggests bribes and threats. Go big or wind up in the auction. Perform well or it's the 5 a.m. flight back to Madagascar for you. Win, or get fitted for cement fins.



If the fish deports well, he is promised a dinner at Legal Seafood's. If he shows well, then he will receive a 40-gallon breeder all to himself in the middle of the fish room. If he really does well and charms the judges into winning his division and hopefully goes on to take the show altogether, then there is satisfaction enough in a job well done.

It feels good to have a champion in the house!!

- Judith Weinberg



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Speakers Only Registration After August 15, 2016	\$60		
Banquet	\$40		
T-shirt Must order by August 27, 2016 (S - M - L - XL)	\$15		
T-shirt (larger than XL)	Add \$2/"X"		
Show Entries-registered attendee, pre-registered by Sept. 9, 2016	\$2 each		
Show Entries-registered attendee, at door, OR non-registered attendee pre-registered by Sept. 9, 2016	\$3 each		
Show Entries-Non-registered attendee-door	\$5 each		
Total - add last column			
Make check payable to Aquarium Club of Lancaster County and mail to:	Aquarium Club of Lancaster County 590 Centerville Road #318 Lancaster, PA 17602		



Hotel Information:

Lancaster Host Resort & Conference Center
2300 Lincoln Highway East (US Route 30)
Lancaster PA 17602

Special Rate \$92/night- specify "Keystone Clash"
For Reservations call 1-(800) 233-0121

Website: www.KeystoneKlash.com

Event Speakers

Rusty Wessel



Fishes of the Rio Puncu

Charley Grimes



Does he really need a topic?

Mark Denaro



*"Yucky Trike"
"The Namesakes"*

Ted Judy



*"Raising Fry from Egg to Adolescence"
"West African Aquariums"*

Keystone Clash Show 2016 Classes

The Keystone Clash will feature a 43 class All Species Show, including 16 classes for the CCY's famous show "Club of the Cichlids." See the event website, www.KeystoneKlash.com for details on the classes.

The Keystone Challenge

The Aquarium Club of Lancaster County and the Cichlid Club of York post this challenge - YOU CAN'T BEAT US! We feel so strongly about this that we are putting our money where our mouths are. The ACLC and CCY will give away all funds received as entry fees for this show - 25% will go to the Individual Show Champion, and 75% will go to the Club Challenge Champion. This could be a great way for your club to earn some recognition and some operating funds.

Here is the point system:

- 1st Place - 10 points each
- 2nd Place - 5 points each
- 3rd Place - 3 points each
- Honorable Mention - 2 points each
- Non-placing Show entries - 1 point each
- Best of Division - Additional 10 points each
- Best Cichlid - Additional 5 points
- People's Choice - Additional 5 points
- Best CARES Species - Additional 5 points
- Reserve of Show - Additional 10 points
- Best of Show - Additional 20 points

For the Club Challenge Championship, the totals of all club members who have declared that club as their home club will be totaled.

Special Awards

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| 7 Best of Division Awards | Best Cichlid | People's Choice |
| Best CARES species | Reserve of Show | Best of Show |
| Show Champion - Individual (most points) | | |
| Show Champion - Club (most points by its members) | | |

HUGE VENDOR AREA

GIANT ALL DAY SUNDAY AUCTION

STARTS AT 11:00 AM



ASK RACHEL!!

Dear Rachel,

With the job I have I am spending more hours in my office than I do at home. I would like to have a Nano tank in my office on my desk. I would like a fish and shrimp tank. Give me your suggestion on what a good setup would be including plants, fish, and shrimp- and filtration system

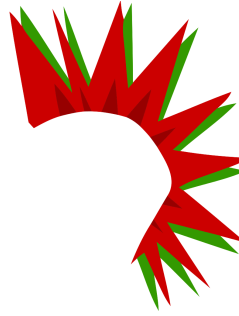
Thank you

Shelia Brandon

Hi Shelia!

Nano tanks are really popular, but it is important to mention that little tanks can be very challenging because of the small volume, which can lead to dramatic parameter shifts. There are some excellent kits on the market, with Fluval being my current favorite. Go with the largest volume and biggest footprint that you can for your space. I would recommend setting the tank up and planting it first, allowing the plants to mature, as that will help with the stability of the tank. With a nano tank, it is extremely important to stock gradually. If you are interested in shrimp, I would start with a Neocaridina variety- Rili of any color, Cherry, Yellow, etc, and allow that population to establish in the tank. Generally the shrimp we purchase are juveniles or subadults, and letting them mature and start to breed before adding fish will help ensure that you keep a good population going. The vast majority of fish, even small ones, will at least attempt to eat baby shrimp. Adding some moss or other fine leaved plants will give them spaces to hide. Once your colony is established, a species like Boraras (brigitiae, merah, urophthalmoides) or Rasbospoma spilocerca (dwarf Scissortail) are among the best small fishes for a limited foot print, and are physically smaller than adult shrimp so tend to do well. Good luck and enjoy!

ASK RACHEL!!



Dear Rachel,

I'm a huge fan of your aquascape work and would like to create something similar in my fish room. I have an empty 55 gallon tank that I would like to use. I would like to have a breeding pair of cichlids within this tank. Give me your recommendation on what substrate, plants, wood and rocks I should use to aquascape my tank and 2ndly what type of cichlid you would recommend.

Sincerely

John Stephan

Hi John!

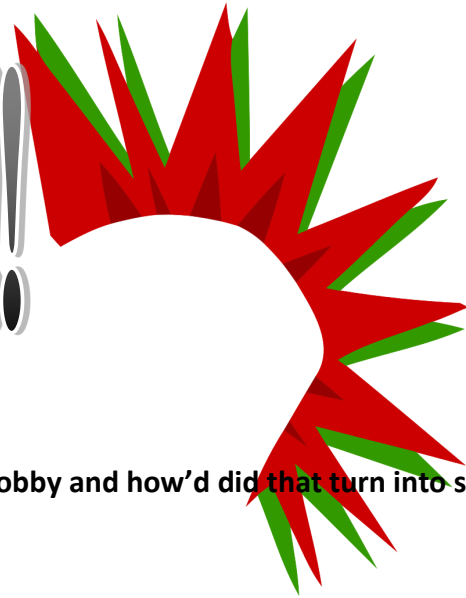
A 55g has LOTS of options! I would suggest first figuring out what sort of color, breeding behavior, and parenting you want to see. For instance, if you want to work with apistogramma or kribensis, then you would want to do lots of tangled driftwood and areas of dense planting throughout the water column. If you wanted to work with something like Laetacara, you need to make sure to provide lateral surfaces for them to lay their eggs, river rocks work great for this, though they will even use flat pieces of driftwood. If you wanted to do a shelldwelling or African species, you would want a very different setup- lots of rock, shells, and minimal planting.



For substrate, again it depends on what you are working with, though with my interests leaning towards South and Central American or West African dwarf species, I generally go for a fine grain, natural/neutral colored gravel, generally 3-5mm. If you were working with an East African species, you may want to consider one of the Cichlid substrates, as they have buffering capacity.

For plants, I prefer to go low tech, low light and stick to things like Cryptocoryne, Java fern, mosses, anubias, and bucephelandras, as they have a low nutrient demand and add very nice visual appeal, as well as good structure for breeding fish to exhibit their best behavior. My favorite dwarf cichlids are Apistogramma, and in a 55g you could do a really awesome biotope, having some pencils (*Nannostomus marginatus* or *mortenthaleri*) for the top, a nice school of tetras for the middle and a pair or harem of the Apistogramma of your choosing. I would use a lot of tangled and stacked driftwood, with anubias and ferns. This allows for territories to be established, and spots for the fry to hide. Something like Brazilian pennwort could be planted or allowed to float at the surface. You may also want to incorporate leaf litter, which will stain your water but is the most natural spawning medium for the fish and will add a very beautiful aesthetic. Good luck, it will be a fun tank!

ASK RACHEL!!



Dear Rachel

I love your hair I love your style- How'd you get into the hobby and how'd did that turn into such a successful business. Rock on!!

- Hard Rock for Life

Thanks for the kind words! My style is not for everyone, but it certainly has assisted in making me memorable! I got into the hobby as an adult when we started our family. Two kids in two years time meant that my job as a Veterinary Technician was only paying for childcare and not much else. We decided at that point that it was in our kids best interests for me to leave the work force and stay home. I am a bit too much of a nerd to not have some sort of sciency project going on, so I got a fish tank for my first mother's day and became very interested in the color heritability of Apple snails (*Pomacea diffusa*, the mystery snail). I started working with them to isolate the less prevalent colors, and eventually wanted small, peaceful critters to keep with them, which is how I got into shrimp. I quickly went from 3 tanks to many, and got very interested in small species of fish, most of which were not available in any stores. This led me to start importing, but I didn't want 600-800 of a species, I wanted 30ish, so I started selling the surplus and writing articles on the species that interested me. I never intended to have a business, but it has grown into one. I still very much think of myself as more of a professional hobbyist than anything else, and sharing my information as well as trying to make sure all my livestock is in good health has always been a priority for me. I take each order individually and personally to try and offer advice to my customers so that they can make educated decisions and have the behaviors and colors they want in their tank. It is a labor of love! One of the drawbacks from working at home is that I never get to leave work, luckily, my passion for nano critters has only grown over the years, and with YouTube as a format, I am able to share my interests in a broader and broader way every week.

About Rachel



*A life-long fish keeper, Rachel's interests range from micro fish to monsters, with a focus on invertebrates and dwarf species. Rachel has spent the last 15 years studying invertebrate husbandry, aquascaping, and breeding practices. Rachel's fish room consists of over 100 tanks ranging from 10 to 220 gallons, and her breeding program includes members of the *Corydoradinae* group, *apistogramma*, *ancistrus*, *hypancistrus*, *pelvicachromis*, as well as various cyprinids and livebearers. You can learn more about her and her wonderful business at <http://msjinkzd.com/>*

On the road again

By Elizabeth Naiper



I love keeping fish! It is such a great way to unwind and distress after a long day. With so many species to choose you just can't go wrong. From small to large, aggressive to timid and in every color found under the rainbow, cichlids are a fascinating fish and well worth dedicating your time to. There are so many joys to keeping cichlids and the hobby in general. From breeding, photography, show competitions, club meetings, to the fellowship you create between other hobbyists. It's been said many times that there are no better people than "fish keeping people" and in my travels I have found that to ring true. Speaking of travels, I would like to discuss my personal favorite part of

the hobby which would be **ROAD TRIPS!!!**

I have always loved being on the road, whether I had a destination or not. Belting out my favorite tunes with the wind in my hair just enjoying the scenery all around me. Add now my best friend in Scott McLaughlin, tropical fish and my passion for traveling has been renewed bigger and better than ever.

This past year Scott and I have been burning up the pavement! From Capital Cichlid Association meetings in Silver Spring MD, shop hops in New Jersey, and the NEC convention in Connecticut, it has been one big adventure after another. So far this year we have seen great talks from collecting cichlids in other countries, keeping Nano fish, as well as how to care for those massive tank busters. We have attended the Big Fish Deal 4 in March which was a complete party with some of the best people in the aquatic business. Not to mention their "Sunday market place" that every year has a line wrapped around the hotel.

The NEC Convention was a massive 3 day event with its 1st annual cichlid show. Obviously any cichlid show within a few hours of us is going to be an event we attend. I left the NEC Convention yet again the brides maid of the cichlid show taking home "reserve best of show" for my Polleni Bleakeri. More importantly we left the NEC inspired and motivated by speakers such as Dr Paul Loiselle, Lawrence Kent and Dr. Ted Coletti. Knowing that everyone's positive efforts in the hobby makes a difference for all to follow, is a simple fact we all need to embrace— thanks Dr Paul Loiselle!



In between big events we traveled to various fish meetings from our home club of The Cichlid Club of York PA to sister clubs The Aquarium Club of Lancaster County and Capital Cichlid Association. There we saw such great and fun speakers as Kevin J Carr, Michael Barber, Joshua Wiegert, Rachel O'Leary, William Garden Peragine, and Jonathan Strazinsky to name a few. We also created our own personal shop hops visiting various shops from Beltway Aquatics in DC, Reef to Rift in Northern PA, Aqua World in Pittsburgh PA, and Pets Plus 2 in New Jersey, We even traveled all the way to New York City to Chinatown and visited Pacific Aquarium and Plant shop.

In July we joined John Morgan and the ever growing club **Cichlids of Pennsylvania** for their well attended Cichlidmania event. Think of a warm family reunion with friends, cichlids and a massive auction and you have Cichlidmania. It was our first time attending and we were very impressed! This past weekend we traveled to Potomac Valley Aquarium Society and enjoyed their annual "bowl show". This show included over 100 entries of various tropical fish including a large amount of cichlids. This was a large event that was well attended and loads of fun. Again some of the best people were present for this event and we all celebrated as our good friend Reed Gilbert took the PVAS Peoples Choice Award for one of his amazing African cichlids.

Needless to say we stay busy with our car logging in with hundreds upon hundreds of miles of road trip fun. And we still have another 5 months in the year to go!! Coming up with have a gathering of all the local clubs at Rachel O'Leary's house. As with anything and everything Rachel does, it should be a blast! Later in September we have the Keystone Clash which is our CCY Cichlid show on steroids! In November we plan on attending the OCA convention as well as the Aquatic Experience in Chicago..... Whewww!! I'm tired just thinking about it!! As always remember this hobby is what you make it. Get out, hit the meetings and events. Rub shoulders with other aquatic people, smile and be pleasant. You never know what you may find at a fish event. Maybe you will meet a road trip partner like I did! Until then keep the top down, the music up and enjoy the breeze— Here's hoping I bump into you at the next big fish event.

Special Thanks

to the following Companies:



**Segrest
Farms**



Super Cichlids

Breeder of healthy, happy African Cichlids
Dover, Delaware
Authorized retailer of Paradigm Fish Food

