

## How to clean your aquarium safely

When you clean your aquarium you will need some products to clean it safely. A flannel or soft cotton cloth that has never been used with any kind of soap will be used to wipe the algae off the side. Flannel or soft cotton should be used so the aquarium glass is not scratched. A brand new scrub brush should be used to wash the rocks. You will also need two brand new buckets, one to hold the rocks while you wash them and the other to hold the fish while you clean the aquarium. If it is possible you should also have a hose with high water pressure. This cuts down on a lot of the manual work. All products used to wash an aquarium MUST be either brand new or never used with soap of any type. Soap residue could be left behind and may kill some fish.

Turn off and remove all heaters and filters. These can be put in the sink and left until they are cleaned. Fill one of the new, clean buckets half full of water from the aquarium. Using the fish net, transfer the fish, one by one, to this bucket until all the fish are out of the aquarium. Next, remove all plants and ornaments. If the plants are living put them in the bucket with the fish. Put all the ornaments on the counter or in the bucket where the rocks go.

Siphon all the water out of the tank. None of this water should go down the drain if you have living plants in the aquarium. This could be hazardous to your septic system. Next, empty all the rocks into the rock bucket and set aside. If you have a hose with high pressure spray, spray the inside of the empty aquarium. Take the flannel or cotton cloth and wet it down thoroughly. It doesn't matter if the water is warm or cold. Rub the sides of the aquarium until all of the algae are off. The cloth will probably need to be rinsed several times so as not to smear the algae around. When you are finished with this, rinse the aquarium out. Check it again to make sure it is clean.

Fill the rock bucket with clean water. Again, if you have a hose with high water pressure spray the rocks. This will help get most of the waste off. Take the scrub brush and scrub the top layer of rocks. Push down heavily to work your way through the layers. Keep emptying the water and filling the bucket with new water. Do this until the water comes out clear. It may take awhile.

Scrub all the ornaments and all the plastic plants. Take the filters apart and scrub each piece. If the charcoal needs replacing, replace it following the directions on the box. The sponge should be rinsed under high water pressure. Put the filter back together. The heater can just be wiped with the flannel or cotton cloth.

Put the rocks back into the aquarium and fill halfway with water. Put the ornaments back in and plant all the plants. Fill the aquarium the rest of the way with water. Add any de-chlorination fluids if needed. Attach the filters and heaters and turn them on when the water is one inch from the top of the aquarium. When the aquarium has reached the right temperature you can put the fish back in. One by one using the net replace the fish. They seem to be in shock when they return to their newly cleaned aquarium so do not feed for 24 hours after cleaning.

***Written by Sarah Davies***