

LEMON TETRA, HYPHESSOBRYCON PULCHRIPINNIS

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Lemon Tetra, male on left

DESCRIPTION

The Lemon Tetra has been in the hobby since 1937 and is a perennial favorite of many. It is colorful, peaceful, and easy to feed. Maximum size is about 2 inches. They come from the Amazon River basin in South America, Rio Tapajos, where the water is clear, soft, and slightly acid. They are quite hardy, tolerate a wide range of water parameters, and are found in the shallows in mild current with plant cover. Their color is a warm, lemon yellow with the top half of the eye a brilliant iridescent red, a sign that the fish is in good health. Full color is not shown until they are completely adult, about 8 or 9 months of age. Sexing can be difficult on younger fish, but males will have a thicker black line on the edge of the anal fin, darker color, and slightly thinner body profile. They are omnivores and eat a variety of foods, but do not usually overeat. It is a schooling and fast-moving fish that can live in the aquarium for 6 or more years. A temperature range of 70-82 degrees is good.

BREEDING

Breeding the Lemon Tetra can be a bit more challenging but by no means difficult. Select healthy adults in good color with the female showing a slight plumpness. Clear soft or rainwater seems to work best with a box filter containing peat moss to add tannins. 77 to 82 degrees is best for breeding. Females can sometimes have trouble expelling eggs or may be picky as to a mate. Live or plastic plants can be used for them to spawn in with large gravel or a matt on the bottom to hide the eggs from getting eaten. A pair can be spawned in as small as a 2 ½ gallon tank if the eggs are siphoned out afterwards, rinsed off, and put in a hatching container of similar fresh water. I like to use 2 drops of 5% methylene blue per gallon to reduce fungus and cut down light, as both the eggs and fry are light-sensitive. In about 2 days, the eggs hatch into tiny fry and require another water change due to the pollution from the decaying eggshells. When free-swimming, feed them infusoria or vinegar eels for several days until they can take baby brine shrimp. The fry will hide effectively against the plants and gravel for about a month before they are seen swimming out in the open.