

WALNUT CREEK SUPPLY

THE COMPLETE CARE GUIDE

Tree Frog

Tall tanks, misting and the frogs that cling to your glass



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New owner? Go straight to Section 1. It is written so you can set up a safe, correct home and get through the first 48 hours without reading anything else first.

*Few animals in the hobby are as quietly charming as a tree frog. They are small, soft-voiced, and a little bit comical, with big toe pads like tiny suction cups and a way of sitting on a leaf as if they've been waiting for you to notice them all evening. They are also more particular than they look. A tree frog is a **nocturnal** (active at night), **arboreal** (tree-dwelling) amphibian with thin, absorbent skin, and nearly every common problem we hear about, from a frog that won't eat to one that looks puffy or pale, traces back to a handful of setup details: height, humidity, clean water, and what goes in the feeder cup. This guide covers three of the best beginner-friendly species: **White's tree frog, the American green tree frog, and the red-eyed tree frog**. They share a lot, but they are not interchangeable, so read the Meet Your Tree Frog section before you buy a single piece of equipment. Get the basics right and these are wonderfully rewarding animals, and a White's tree frog can keep you company for 15 to 20 years or more.*

SECTION 1

Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours

1. **Confirm which species you actually have, then plan around it.** White's, American green, and red-eyed tree frogs look similar to a beginner but have different size, temperature, and humidity needs. Check the species name against the Meet Your Tree Frog table in this guide before you finalize any equipment. If you are not sure, ask the seller or a reptile-and-amphibian vet to identify it.
2. **Set up the whole enclosure before the frog arrives.** For one or two small frogs (green or red-eyed), the minimum is about **18" x 18" x 24" tall**. For a White's tree frog or a small group, step up to **24" x 18" x 36" tall**. Tree frogs climb, so height matters far more than floor space. The lid must be a secure screen top, because tree frogs are escape artists with sticky feet.
3. **Run the thermometers and hygrometer for a full day first.** Daytime temperature should sit at **72-82°F** depending on species (White's and green 75-82°F; red-eyed 75-80°F), dropping to **68-75°F** at night. Never let the enclosure climb above about **85°F**. Check humidity with a digital hygrometer, not a guess.
4. **Lay down the substrate and plant it.** A damp layer of coco fiber or sphagnum moss, a few live or artificial plants with broad leaves, and several climbing branches at different heights. Plants are not just decoration. They are where a tree frog sleeps, hides, and feels safe.
5. **Make the water safe.** Tap water contains chlorine and often **chloramine**, both of which harm amphibian skin. Treat all water with a **dechlorinator** (a water conditioner that neutralizes chlorine and chloramine; check the label says it handles both) before it goes in the dish or the mister.
6. **Set a day/night cycle.** Roughly 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness, on a timer. Tree frogs are nocturnal, so the lights-out hours are when they come alive. Do not leave a light on overnight.
7. **Add a low-level UVB lamp if you are planning for it.** **Ferguson zone 1** lighting (the lowest category on the scale used to match UVB strength to a species' natural habits) is increasingly recommended for tree frogs. We explain exactly how to set it up below, with plenty of shade and leaf cover so the frog can choose.
8. **Let the new frog settle in for 48 hours, hands off.** Place the frog in the enclosure, mist lightly, close the lid, and leave it alone. It may sit motionless on a leaf for most of the first day. That is normal. A quiet, unhandled settling-in period lowers stress and helps the frog start eating.
9. **Offer a first meal on night two.** Appropriately sized, **gut-loaded** (fed a nutritious diet for a day or two before your frog eats them), calcium-dusted crickets or small roaches, dropped near the frog in the evening. If it doesn't eat the first night, don't panic. Remove uneaten insects by morning (crickets will chew on a sleeping frog) and try again the next evening.

10. Wash your hands before and after every contact with the frog, the water, or anything inside the enclosure.

Amphibians can carry **Salmonella**, and their skin is far more sensitive to soap, lotion, and sanitizer residue than ours. Wash first, rinse thoroughly, then touch.

11. Find an amphibian-experienced veterinarian now. Many vets who treat dogs and cats don't see frogs. Call ahead, ask directly about amphibians, and keep the number near the enclosure.**First-Time Starter Bundle**

What needs to be in the house on day one, and what to look for in each category.

Essentials

- **A tall glass or front-opening terrarium** — at least 18" x 18" x 24" for one or two small frogs, or 24" x 18" x 36" for White's tree frogs and groups. Front-opening doors are easier on the frog than reaching in from above, where a predator would come from. Good ventilation across the top and upper sides, with the rest of the enclosure holding moisture.
- **A secure screen lid** — fine-mesh, clip- or latch-secured, with no gaps wide enough for a determined small frog. Partially covering the screen with a sheet of glass or acrylic helps hold humidity in without choking off airflow.
- **Two digital probe thermometers** — one placed high in the enclosure and one low, so you can see the temperature gradient. Stick-on strips are not accurate enough.
- **A digital hygrometer** — mounted at mid-height, away from the direct spray of the mister. Humidity is a number you measure, not guess.
- **A coco fiber or sphagnum moss substrate** — loose, moisture-holding, free of fertilizers, pesticides, and added perlite.
- **Branches, vines, and horizontal perches at several heights** — sturdy, securely wedged, with some positioned diagonally for easy climbing.
- **A shallow water dish** — wide and low enough that the frog can climb in and out without struggling, and that never holds more than a belly-deep soak.
- **A water conditioner that removes chlorine and chloramine** — for the dish, the mister, and any water that touches the frog.
- **A hand-pump or pressure sprayer for misting** — dedicated to the frog's enclosure and never used with chemicals.
- **Plain calcium powder without vitamin D3** — for dusting most feedings.
- **A reptile and amphibian multivitamin** — ideally with vitamin A in beta-carotene form — for scheduled dusting.
- **A feeder insect starter set** — a few days' supply of appropriately sized feeders along with a gut-loading food, plus a ventilated container to house them.
- **A lamp timer** — for a consistent day/night cycle.

Ready to set up? Browse the essentials in our collections: [Reptile and Amphibian Enclosures](#) and [Reptile and Amphibian Terrarium Supplies & Accessories](#).

Enrichment

- **Live or artificial plants with broad, sturdy leaves** — pothos, philodendron, and bromeliads thrive in a humid terrarium. Artificial leaves are easier to maintain and still give the frog places to perch and sleep.
- **Cork bark rounds and half-logs** — for daytime hides. Tree frogs like to wedge into tight spots while they sleep.
- **A background panel** — cork, foam, or a printed backdrop on the back and sides gives the frog a sense of cover and bumps up humidity retention.

- **A low-level UVB fixture** — a tube or compact fixture rated for Ferguson zone 1 animals, mounted over one end of the enclosure so there is always shade available.
- **A small leaf-litter or magnolia-leaf layer** — for the substrate surface; gives feeders somewhere to hide and gives the frog something to explore at night.
- **A bioactive cleanup crew** — springtails and isopods in the substrate break down waste and keep the lower layer fresher. Optional, but many keepers swear by it.
- **A red or low-output nighttime viewing light** — so you can watch your frog on its night shift without disrupting the day/night rhythm.
- **A small travel container** — a ventilated, damp-paper-towel-lined tub for vet trips.

Enrichment, one click away. Shop Reptile and Amphibian Accessories.

SECTION 2

Meet Your Tree Frog

Tree frogs are found on nearly every continent, but the species most commonly kept as pets come from three very different places. **White's tree frogs** (*Litoria caerulea*) are native to Australia and New Guinea, where they are common enough to turn up in drainpipes, bathrooms, and tin roofs, which is how they earned the nickname "dumpy tree frog" for their stout build and soft chin pad. **American green tree frogs** (*Hyla cinerea*; some current references list the genus as *Dryophytes*) are native to the southeastern United States, where their "quonk, quonk" chorus is the sound of a warm, damp summer night. **Red-eyed tree frogs** (*Agalychnis callidryas*) come from the rainforests of Central America and are probably the most photographed amphibian on earth, with lime-green bodies, blue-and-yellow flanks, orange feet, and wide scarlet eyes.

All three are **arboreal**, meaning they live in trees and shrubs rather than on the ground, and all three are **nocturnal**, meaning they sleep through the day and hunt, call, and climb after dark.

Trait	White's tree frog	American green tree frog	Red-eyed tree frog
Scientific name	<i>Litoria caerulea</i>	<i>Hyla cinerea</i>	<i>Agalychnis callidryas</i>
Native range	Australia, New Guinea	Southeastern United States	Central America (southern Mexico to Panama)
Adult size	3-4.5 inches	1.5-2.5 inches	2-3 inches
Typical lifespan	15-20+ years	About 5-10 years	About 5-10 years
Temperament	Docile, calm, tolerates brief handling	Hardy, active, skittish	Striking but delicate; best admired, not held
Daytime temperature	75-82°F	75-82°F	75-80°F
Nighttime temperature	68-75°F	68-75°F	68-75°F
Humidity	50-70%	50-70%	60-80%
Minimum enclosure	24" x 18" x 36" tall	18" x 18" x 24" tall	18" x 18" x 24" tall; taller is better
Sociability	Can share if space is generous	Communal	Communal
Biggest watch-out	Obesity; very long commitment	Fast and good at escaping	Higher humidity; stress-prone
Beginner rating	Excellent	Excellent	Intermediate

Confirm your species before you buy equipment

If there is one thing to take from this section, it's this: **confirm the exact species before you spend money on the enclosure.** A group of American green tree frogs and a single White's tree frog do not need the same tank. A White's tree frog will outgrow a small enclosure, and a red-eyed tree frog in a dry, drafty setup will slowly dehydrate. If a store or seller can't tell you the scientific name, ask for a photo and compare it with this table, or have a veterinarian confirm before you commit to equipment.

One more thing worth saying plainly. **Do not collect tree frogs from the wild**, even though green tree frogs are common in much of the Southeast. Wild-caught frogs often carry parasites and may have been exposed to wild disease, and removing them quietly depletes local populations. Buy captive-bred animals from a reputable source. And if you ever have to rehome a frog, never release it outdoors. Pet frogs can carry **chytrid** (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, a fungus that attacks amphibian skin and has devastated wild frog populations worldwide), and released pets can spread it or establish where they don't belong. Rehome

through a reptile and amphibian rescue or a trusted hobbyist instead.

White's tree frog

The White's is the classic first tree frog, and for good reason. It is large, calm, and forgiving of the occasional beginner mistake. It sits with a quiet, slightly sleepy expression, has a distinctive fatty fold over each eye, and can become so comfortable in its enclosure that you can open the door without it flinching. The tradeoff is **longevity and appetite**. A well-kept White's regularly lives 15 to 20 years, and some have passed 20, so this is a family-pet-length commitment. They also love to eat, and **obesity is the most common health problem in captive White's tree frogs**. They need a larger enclosure than the smaller species and a measured feeding schedule.

American green tree frog

The green tree frog is the hardy, social, easygoing one. It tops out at around two and a half inches, handles a wider range of conditions than the red-eyed tree frog, and does well in groups of similar size. Greens are active and quick, so they test lid security constantly. They are also a great fit for a planted, bioactive setup, because the small footprint and easy-going nature make them forgiving. Males call in the evening, a loud, honking "quonk" that is surprisingly big for such a small animal.

Red-eyed tree frog

Red-eyed tree frogs look like a toy, and that is part of the trouble. They are gorgeous, but they are also more delicate, more sensitive to humidity swings, and **not good candidates for handling**. They spend the day pressed flat against a leaf with their legs tucked, eyes closed, and blue-and-orange flanks hidden, which is camouflage rather than shyness. At night, they bound across the enclosure with astonishing agility. Red-eyed tree frogs are a rewarding species for a keeper who wants to build a beautiful planted display and watch it, but they ask more of you than the other two. If this is your very first frog, start with a White's or a green.

What origin tells you about the setup

Every number in this guide, from temperature to humidity, is an echo of where the animal comes from. Red-eyed tree frogs live in damp, warm lowland rainforest, so they want it consistently humid. White's tree frogs live in drier woodland and scrub, and they survive Australian summers by tucking into tight, moist spots in the heat of the day, so they tolerate somewhat lower humidity and a bit more drying between mistings. American green tree frogs live in swamps, ponds, and shady edge habitat, so they enjoy moisture and tolerate a range of seasons. The lesson is simple: if you build the tank to match the native habitat, the frog's behavior takes care of itself.

What surprises new owners

Three things catch most first-time tree frog keepers off guard. The first is **how quiet daytime is**. Tree frogs sleep 12 hours or more, and some owners assume something is wrong when the frog sits motionless all day. A sleeping frog is a normal frog. The second is **how much they eat and how fast they gain weight**, especially White's. The third is the **sheer sensitivity of the skin**. Anything on your hands, from lotion and hand soap to the residue of sanitizer, can pass into the frog on contact. You will find yourself washing and rinsing your hands more thoroughly than you ever have, and that is exactly the right instinct.

SECTION 3

Enclosure Setup & Layout

Think tall, not wide

If you remember one rule of tree frog housing, make it this one: **height, not floor space**. A tree frog's whole life happens in three dimensions. It climbs at night, sleeps on a leaf in the daytime, and uses the vertical gradient (warmer and drier up high, cooler and more humid down low) to regulate itself. A wide, short tank wastes the space that matters and leaves the frog with nowhere to go.

Setup	Minimum enclosure	Approximate volume	Best for
One or two small frogs	18" x 18" x 24" tall	About 33 gallons	American green or red-eyed tree frogs
Larger frog or small group	24" x 18" x 36" tall	About 67 gallons	A White's tree frog, or three to four small frogs
Each additional small frog	Add roughly 5 gallons of volume and some extra climbing room	Varies	Communal green or red-eyed groups

Bigger is always better, provided the enclosure still holds humidity. A front-opening terrarium with a screen top is the easiest format to work with. The door lets you service the tank without looming over the frog from above, and the screen top gives you ventilation. Fully screened enclosures lose moisture too fast for most species. Fully sealed glass holds too much, and stagnant air breeds bacterial and fungal problems. The sweet spot is **ventilation up high, moisture-holding walls and substrate down low**.

The layout, top to bottom

Picture the enclosure as a tall cutaway drawing with five labeled zones. Every item below has a job.

A. Screen top and lighting zone (the ceiling): a secure mesh lid, partially covered along one side with a sheet of glass or acrylic to hold humidity. Over the open half, mount the day lamp and a low-level UVB fixture. The lighting stays on one side, so the other half of the enclosure is always a shaded retreat.

B. Canopy perches (top quarter): two or three horizontal branches or sturdy vines running side to side, set 3 to 6 inches below the lid. This is the warmest, driest level, and where a White's or green will sleep on a warm afternoon. Add one large artificial or live leaf here for the frog to press against. Keep all perches **at least 6 inches below the lamp and the lid**, so the frog can't overheat or touch hot hardware.

C. Mid-level climbing branches (middle half): a network of diagonal and horizontal branches, thick enough that the frog's toe pads can grip comfortably, with at least one branch wide enough to rest flat across. Weave in vines and broad-leaf plants so there are always visual barriers between the frog and the front glass. This is where most night-time travel happens.

D. Hides and sleeping leaves (scattered through B and C): a cork bark half-tube mounted vertically on the back wall, a cluster of broad leaves, and a dense plant such as a pothos or philodendron. Daytime sleepers choose a spot and return to it. Give them several options.

E. The ground level (bottom third): a drainage-friendly substrate layer, a shallow water dish set flush against the front or side, a few pieces of leaf litter, and low plants. This is the cooler, more humid end. The water dish should be easy to climb into, with a rock or branch as a ramp.

Background and sides: cover the back and at least one side wall with cork, foam, or an opaque backdrop. It reduces reflection stress, holds humidity, and gives the frog something to cling to.

Plants: live versus artificial

Live plants help with humidity and air quality, and give the frog a natural surface to rest on. **Pothos, philodendron, bromeliads, spider plants, and ficus** are all common, durable choices that tolerate a humid tank. Rinse any new plant thoroughly and avoid plants sold with systemic pesticides or fertilizer sticks. Artificial plants with broad, silicone-textured leaves are a good alternative, easier to sanitize, and fine for quarantine setups. The best displays mix both.

Whatever you choose, **the leaves need to be big enough and sturdy enough to hold the frog's weight.** A White's tree frog can weigh as much as a golf ball and will bend a thin leaf to the floor.

Branches and climbing furniture

Use only smooth, securely mounted wood and vines. Cork bark, manzanita, grapevine, and bamboo are all reliable. Skip anything with sharp points or splintered ends, because a frog's skin tears easily. Wedge each branch so that it cannot slip. A frog that jumps at night and lands on a loose perch can be injured by the fall. Place the branches so there are **multiple routes between every level**, which stops a larger frog from blocking a smaller one in group setups.

Securing the lid

Tree frogs can slip through gaps barely wider than a pencil, and they climb glass with ease. A lid that closes on a hinge, clips, or locks is worth every penny. Check it on the first night. If you're also housing crickets or other feeders nearby, remember that an open lid on the feeder tub is as much an escape route as an open lid on the frog tank.

Cleaning and sanitation

Rinse décor and the water dish with hot water, and use only reptile- and amphibian-safe disinfectants when a deep clean is needed. Rinse thoroughly, because even trace residue is dangerous to amphibians. Never use household cleaners, scented products, or bleach in or near the enclosure unless you're sanitizing an empty setup and rinsing it multiple times until there is no residual smell.

SECTION 4

Substrate Guide

The substrate is the foundation of your humidity system. It holds moisture, supports plants, and takes the daily hit of misting and waste. A good tree frog substrate is **loose, damp but never soggy, free of chemicals, and impossible to swallow in a harmful quantity.**

Substrate	Best for	Performance	Notes
Coco fiber (coir)	Standard setups, live plants	Excellent moisture retention; loose and easy for plants to root in; resists mold when damp but not wet	Pre-moisten and wring out before use; rinse bricks that come with high salt content
Sphagnum moss (long-fiber)	Humidity-hungry setups, red-eyed tree frogs, top layer	Holds many times its weight in water; naturally slightly acidic and slow to rot	Use as a top layer or blend with coco fiber; replace as it breaks down
Bioactive mix (coco fiber, sphagnum, leaf litter, and a cleanup crew of springtails and isopods)	Long-term planted displays	Breaks down waste naturally; supports live plants; stays fresher between full changes	Needs a drainage layer and a few weeks to establish; do not use topsoil with fertilizer or pesticides
Organic, chemical-free topsoil blended with coco fiber	Experienced keepers building bioactive displays	Rich growing medium for plants	Check the label carefully; no fertilizer, no pesticides, no perlite beads
Paper towels	Quarantine, new arrivals, sick frogs	Easy to inspect droppings; easy to sanitize; zero ingestion risk	Replace daily; not a long-term setup, since it doesn't hold humidity as well
Large, smooth leaf litter (magnolia, oak)	Surface layer over any base	Gives feeders cover and the frog a natural-looking floor	Use only leaves collected from pesticide-free sources, dried and rinsed
Loose fine sand	Avoid	Dries out fast; can be swallowed with food; poor humidity	No safe use for a tree frog
Gravel and small pebbles	Avoid	Swallowing hazard; abrasive; hard to clean	Fine as a drainage layer buried below a barrier, never on the surface
Cedar and aromatic pine shavings	Never	The aromatic oils are toxic to amphibians	No safe use for any amphibian or reptile
Bark chips and small bark pieces	Avoid	Pieces can be swallowed during feeding and cause blockages; mold easily when wet	Larger decorative bark slabs are fine as hides, not as loose substrate
Calcium sand and "digestible" sand	Avoid outright	Not a safe or reliable calcium source; still an impaction risk	Remove from any setup immediately

The avoid-outright list

Everything below should stay out of a tree frog enclosure at all times: **sand of any kind, gravel on the surface, cedar or aromatic pine, small bark chips, pellet or chip substrates meant for other animals, calcium sand, any soil with added**

fertilizer, pesticides, or perlite beads, and any material that has been treated with chemicals. The risk for a frog isn't just what it might swallow. Its thin skin sits against the substrate for much of the day, and anything on that surface can be absorbed.

Setting up the layers

Start with a **1 to 2 inch drainage layer** of clay pebbles or similar material, topped with a mesh barrier to keep the substrate from mixing into it. Add **2 to 3 inches of damp coco fiber and sphagnum moss**, shaped so there is a shallow slope toward the water dish. Add a layer of leaf litter over the top. The substrate should feel like a wrung-out sponge: damp when squeezed, but never dripping.

Keeping it fresh

Spot-clean droppings daily. Stir the surface layer every week or two to prevent compaction. Replace the full substrate every **3 to 4 months** in a non-bioactive setup. In a bioactive setup, top up the leaf litter regularly and refresh the substrate only when it begins to smell sour or looks compacted and waterlogged.

SECTION 5

Heat, Light & Humidity — The 3 Numbers

Tree frogs live in the balance between three numbers: **temperature, humidity, and light**. Get them all right at the same time, and nearly everything else about their care falls into place. Get one wrong and the symptoms can look like twelve different problems.

Parameter	Target value	How to measure it	What goes wrong when it's off
Daytime temperature (White's and green)	75-82°F	Digital probe thermometer at mid-height; infrared thermometer for spot checks on perches	Below 72°F: slow digestion, reduced appetite, weaker immune response; above 85°F: heat stress, dehydration, can be fatal
Daytime temperature (red-eyed)	75-80°F	Same as above	Above 82°F consistently: stress and dehydration; below 72°F: appetite loss
Nighttime temperature	68-75°F	Probe thermometer read after lights out	A natural drop supports normal rhythms; below 65°F for long periods invites illness
Absolute ceiling	Never above about 85°F	Probe thermometer at the highest perch	Overheating happens fast in a small glass tank
Humidity (White's and green)	50-70%	Digital hygrometer at mid-height, away from the mister	Below 45%: dehydration, shedding trouble, dull skin; above 80% with poor airflow: bacterial and fungal growth
Humidity (red-eyed)	60-80%	Same as above	Below 55%: stress, dehydration; constantly above 85% with stagnant air: infections
Light cycle	About 12 hours on, 12 hours off	Timer; observe behavior	Constant light disrupts sleep and feeding rhythms; no daylight cycle dulls appetite
UVB (Ferguson zone 1)	Low level, with shade always available	UV index meter at the highest perch, or follow the lamp manufacturer's distance chart	Too little over time may contribute to bone problems; too much without shade can cause eye and skin damage

Temperature: keep it gentle

Most homes sit comfortably in the low-to-mid 70s, which is right at the bottom of what a tree frog needs. If your room stays at **72°F or above** during the day and **68°F or above** at night, you may not need any supplemental heat at all. If it runs cooler, add **gentle heat only**: a low-wattage bulb or ceramic heat emitter mounted outside the enclosure's screen top and **controlled by a thermostat**, so it can't run away on a hot afternoon. Skip heat rocks and under-tank heat mats, which burn frogs and dry out the substrate. And keep an eye on summer. A tank near a sunny window can climb past 85°F in an hour.

The **night drop** matters too. A natural cool-down to 68-75°F mirrors the shift in their native habitats and supports normal appetite and activity.

Humidity and the drying-out cycle

Humidity is where most tree frog problems begin. Tree frogs need moisture to protect their skin, but a tank that is permanently saturated invites bacteria. The answer is a **cycle**, not a constant. Mist heavily in the evening, when the frog wakes, and again lightly in the morning. Humidity should peak after misting and then drift down through the day, giving the upper surfaces a chance to dry out. For White's and green tree frogs, readings that swing between **50% and 70%** are ideal. For red-eyed tree frogs, aim for **60-80%**, with the same pattern of wetting and drying.

Ventilation is the other half of the equation. Humid, stagnant air is a breeding ground for the organisms behind skin infections and respiratory trouble. A screen top, a few vents or a small clip-on fan on a timer used gently, and a tank that is not completely sealed all help air move without drying everything out. If you can smell the tank from across the room, the air is not moving enough.

Light: day, night, and low-level UVB

A consistent **12-hour day/night cycle** on a timer is the foundation. Use a plant-friendly daytime lamp so live plants thrive, and turn everything off at night. Tree frogs do not need basking heat.

On UVB, the thinking in amphibian husbandry has shifted. For decades, keepers believed nocturnal frogs needed no UV at all, and many tree frogs have lived long lives without it, relying on supplements. More recent work suggests that **low-level UVB, in Ferguson zone 1, benefits many amphibians**, supporting vitamin D3 production and calcium use, particularly in indoor setups. Here is the safe way to approach it:

- **Choose a low-output, zone 1-rated fixture** designed for shade-dwelling animals, not a high-output reptile basking tube.
- **Mount it over one end** of the enclosure, so one side always stays in shade.
- **Fill the lit area with leaves and plants**, so the frog can hide beneath foliage whenever it likes.
- **Aim for a very low UV index at the frog's usual perch**, typically around 0.5-1.0 at the highest perch with much less in the shade, and confirm with a UV index meter if you can.
- **Replace the lamp on the manufacturer's schedule**, usually every 6 to 12 months, since output fades before the light visibly dims.

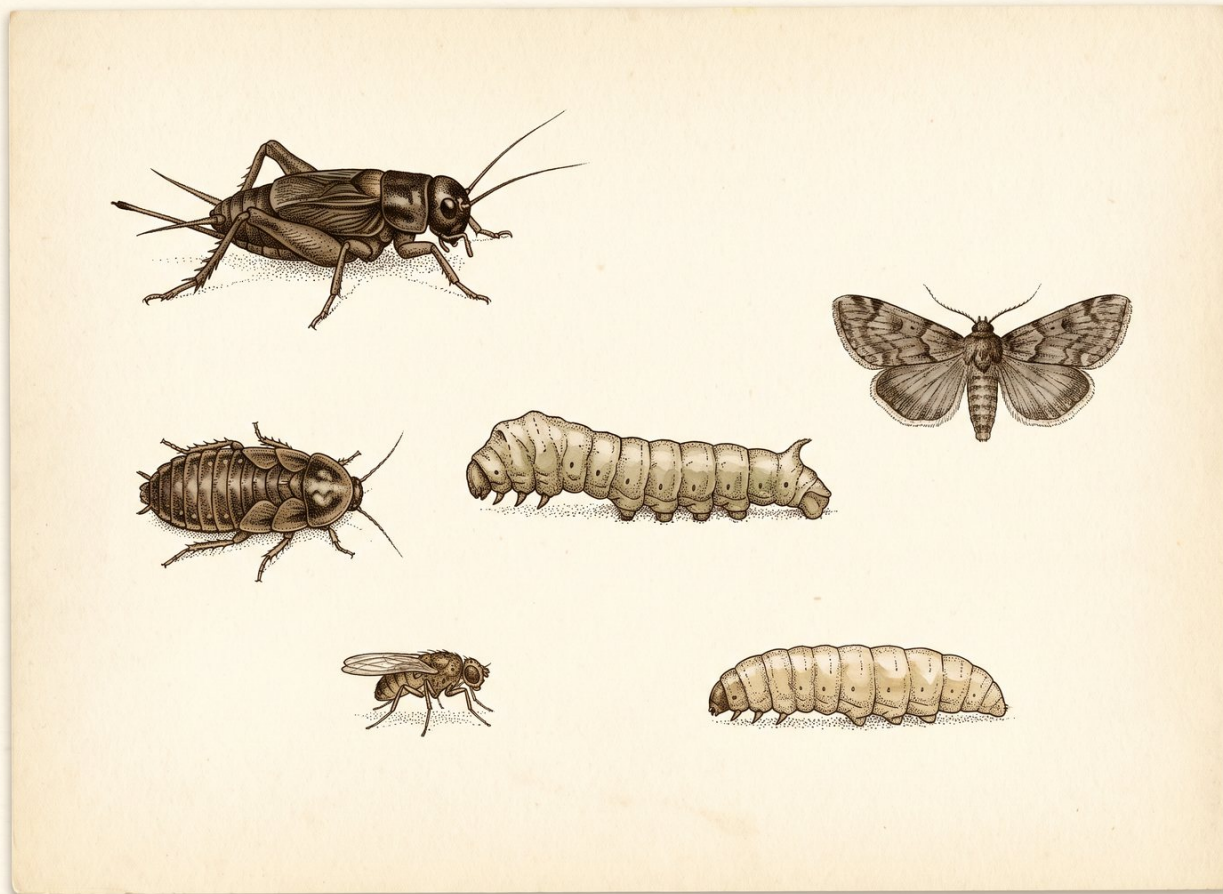
If you decide not to use UVB, compensate with a careful supplement routine, covered in the Diet & Nutrition section, and discuss the choice with your vet.

Measuring all three numbers

Place one thermometer near the top of the enclosure and one near the bottom. Mount the hygrometer at mid-height, away from the direct spray. Check all three at least once a day for the first month, and once a day at the start of each season after that. A calibrated digital probe tells you the truth. A stick-on strip does not.

SECTION 6

Diet & Nutrition



Gut-loaded, dusted insects sized to the frog. Crickets and roaches as the base; waxworms only as an occasional treat.

Tree frogs are **insectivores**, which means they eat insects, and they eat them alive. A frog's eyes detect movement, so a dead or motionless insect is usually ignored. The food has to move, and what that food has eaten and been dusted with matters as much as the insect itself.

The feeder table

Feeder	Role	Frequency	Notes
Crickets	Staple	Regular rotation	Easy to find and gut-load; remove uneaten crickets overnight because they can chew on a resting frog
Dubia roaches (small nymphs)	Staple	Regular rotation	Quiet, climb poorly, and are high in protein; a great cricket alternative
Other small roaches	Staple	Regular rotation	Small sizes only; good variety

Feeder	Role	Frequency	Notes
Flies (fruit flies, houseflies, blue bottle fly larvae)	Staple for small frogs and froglets	Regular	Fruit flies suit tiny froglets; flightless varieties are easier to manage
Moths	Variety	Occasional	Great natural enrichment; use captive-raised moths only
Silkworms	Staple or variety	Regular	Soft, high in moisture, nutritious, and low in fat
Hornworms	Treat only	Occasional	High in moisture, low in nutrition; helpful for hydration or a sick appetite
Waxworms	Treat only	Rarely	Very fatty; best reserved for underweight or recovering frogs
Mealworms and superworms	Limit	Rarely	Hard shells and heavy fat content; not a staple
Wild-caught insects	Never	Never	Risk of pesticides, parasites, and toxins
Fireflies (lightning bugs)	Never	Never	Their body chemistry is toxic to many frogs and lizards

Prey sizing

The simple rule: **no feeder should be wider than the space between the frog's eyes**. An insect that is too big can cause choking, regurgitation, or digestive blockages. Juveniles need pinhead crickets and fruit flies; a large White's can take full-size crickets and small dubia. When in doubt, go a size smaller and offer a little more.

Gut-loading

Gut-loading means feeding your feeder insects nutritious food in the 24 to 48 hours before they go to your frog, so that their stomachs are full of the good stuff when your frog eats them. A balanced gut-load diet, plus fresh greens, sweet potato, carrot, and a source of moisture such as a gel or fresh orange slice, turns a plain cricket into a real meal. An unfed cricket is little more than a crunchy shell. This is the "Clean Fuel, No Junk" principle at work, applied to the dinner table of an animal the size of your thumb.

Supplement schedule

Supplement	Schedule	Notes
Plain calcium powder (no vitamin D3)	Dust at most feedings, roughly 2 of every 3	A light dusting only; the insect should look like it has been dipped in flour, not coated in snow
Reptile and amphibian multivitamin (ideally with vitamin A as beta-carotene)	About every second week	Preformed vitamin A can build up if oversupplied; follow the label
Calcium with vitamin D3	About every second to fourth week, and more often if you are not using UVB	Vitamin D3 builds up in the body; keep it occasional and talk to your vet if unsure

Ask your amphibian vet to tailor this schedule, especially if you are using UVB, since the lamp changes how much supplemental D3 is needed. Rotate the supplements so the frog gets a balanced picture rather than the same powder every time.

How often to feed

Frog	Frequency	Portion
Froglings and juveniles	Daily	Several tiny feeders
Adult American green or red-eyed tree frog	Every other day	3 to 5 appropriately sized insects
Adult White's tree frog	2 to 3 times a week	3 to 5 insects, measured; skip a feeding if the frog looks heavy

Feed in the evening, once the lights go out and the frog is awake. Remove uneaten crickets by morning.

The obesity warning

Obesity is the most common problem in captive tree frogs, and especially in White's. Because these frogs sit patiently and eat whatever drops in front of them, it is easy to overfeed. The warning signs are **fat rolls above the eyes** (a heavy, puffy brow that looks like a pair of rounded pillows), a bulging abdomen, and the sides of the body bulging wider than the head. An overweight frog is at higher risk of fatty liver disease and a shorter life. The fix is simple but needs patience: reduce the number of feeders, drop fatty treats, space out feedings, and encourage movement by feeding from tongs at different heights. Weigh your frog every month to catch trends early.

Never feed

- **Wild-caught insects**, which may carry pesticides or parasites
- **Fireflies**, which are toxic
- **Insects larger than the gap between the eyes**
- **Dead or freeze-dried insects** as a staple (frogs usually ignore them, and they offer little nutrition)
- **Human food, meat, cheese, or pet food**
- **Waxworms or hornworms as daily food**
- **Insects fed a poor diet** or left unfed for days
- **Vitamin D3 powder on every feeding**

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SECTION 7

Water, Misting & Shedding

Dechlorinated water, always

Tree frogs drink and absorb water through their skin, so whatever is in the water goes straight into the animal. **Tap water contains chlorine and often chloramine**, a chlorine-ammonia compound that does not fade by sitting in an open bowl, and both can harm amphibians. Treat all water for the dish and the mister with a **dechlorinator** that explicitly neutralizes both. Many keepers also use filtered or spring water. Skip distilled water used alone, which lacks minerals.

The water dish

Provide a **shallow dish** deep enough for a gentle soak but shallow enough that the frog can climb out easily, with a branch or stone as a ramp. **Change the water every day**, scrubbing the dish weekly. Frogs often soak, drink, and also relieve themselves in the dish, so fresh water matters.

Misting

Mist the enclosure **once or twice daily**, aiming for droplets on the leaves and glass. Tree frogs often drink from the droplets, which mimics rain. Evening misting is the most important, as the frog wakes. A fine spray from a dedicated bottle, or an automatic misting system on a timer, both work. Aim for damp, not drenched. After misting, check that the humidity falls into the right range through the day and that the substrate is not sitting in standing water.

Shedding

Frogs **shed** the outer layer of their skin regularly, anywhere from every few days to every few weeks, depending on species and conditions. It is a quick process and usually happens at night. The frog may hunch, stretch, and wipe its skin off in a single translucent sheet, then **eat the skin**. It is normal, and you may never see it. What you might notice is a dull, slightly cloudy look just before a shed. Healthy shedding needs good humidity and clean water. Skin that stays patchy, stuck, or dry may point to low humidity or illness; see the challenges below.

SECTION 8

Common Challenges & Solutions

Frogs are masters of hiding illness. By the time something looks wrong, the problem has often been building for a while. Learn what normal looks like in your own frog, and act early.

Metabolic bone disease (MBD)

What you see: a soft or rubbery jaw, trembling or twitching limbs, bowed legs, a crooked spine, difficulty climbing or catching prey, and in advanced cases fractures. **Why:** a shortage of usable calcium or vitamin D3, often from inadequate supplementation, a poor gut-load, or no UVB. **What to do:** review the supplement schedule, improve gut-loading, and add low-level zone 1 UVB. **When to call a vet:** at the first sign of limb tremors or jaw softness. Early-stage cases respond to treatment; advanced ones leave permanent deformity.

Obesity

What you see: fat rolls above the eyes, a rounded or bulging body, and a frog that sits on the same leaf for days. **Why:** too much food, too many fatty feeders, and too little activity, especially in White's tree frogs. **What to do:** cut portions, space out feedings, drop waxworms and mealworms, and weigh monthly. **When to call a vet:** if weight loss does not begin within a couple of months, or if the frog is lethargic, which can point to fatty liver disease.

Red-leg (bacterial infection)

What you see: reddening on the belly, thighs, or toes caused by broken blood vessels, along with lethargy, poor appetite, and sometimes swelling or bloating. **Why:** a bacterial infection, often involving *Aeromonas* bacteria, usually triggered by dirty water, poor sanitation, stress, or an over-saturated tank. **What to do:** move the frog to a clean quarantine setup with paper towel and fresh dechlorinated water, and clean the main tank. **When to call a vet:** the same day. Red-leg can become fatal quickly and needs prescription treatment.

Fungal and skin infections

What you see: cottony or white patches, cloudy or discolored skin, raised spots, or excess slime. **Why:** a persistently soggy tank, poor ventilation, dirty substrate, or a stressed immune system. **What to do:** improve airflow, let the tank dry between mistings, replace the substrate, and move the frog to paper-towel quarantine. **When to call a vet:** promptly. Some skin changes look the same whether the cause is fungal or bacterial, and only testing sorts them out.

Bloat and edema

What you see: a puffy, waterlogged-looking body, swollen limbs, or a taut, balloon-like abdomen. **Why:** the frog is retaining fluid, which can be caused by kidney or heart problems, infection, or water quality issues. **What to do:** check water treatment and temperatures, and move the frog to a clean quarantine setup. **When to call a vet:** the same day. Edema is almost never a home-fix situation.

Skin shedding problems

What you see: stuck patches of skin, flaky or dull skin that persists, or a frog that keeps rubbing against objects. **Why:** low humidity, dehydration, poor water quality, or underlying illness. **What to do:** raise humidity within the target range, offer a gentle soak in shallow, dechlorinated water, and do not pull at stuck skin. **When to call a vet:** if skin remains stuck after two or three days of improved humidity, or if the underlying skin looks red or raw.

Parasites

What you see: weight loss despite a good appetite, loose or unusual stools, or lethargy. **Why:** internal parasites are common in **wild-caught** frogs and can occasionally appear in captive-bred ones. **What to do:** collect a fresh fecal sample in a clean container and bring it to your vet. Do not use over-the-counter dewormers without a diagnosis. **When to call a vet:** any time you suspect parasites. Avoid wild-caught animals to avoid them.

Chytrid fungus

What you see: excess skin shedding, lethargy, loss of appetite, discoloration, unusual posture, and sometimes sudden death. **Why:** *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, a fungus that infects the skin and interferes with the frog's ability to absorb water and salts. **What to do:** isolate the frog right away and call a vet. **Never release a pet frog outdoors, and never mix wild frogs with captive ones.** **When to call a vet:** immediately, since chytrid can spread to other amphibians.

Dehydration

What you see: wrinkled, dull skin, sunken eyes, sluggishness, and a frog that sits in the water dish for long stretches. **Why:** humidity or water access too low, or a tank that is too hot. **What to do:** check and correct temperature and humidity, mist more, and offer a shallow soak in clean dechlorinated water. **When to call a vet:** if the frog is not perking up within a day, or if it is limp.

Vitamin A deficiency

What you see: swollen eyes or eyelids, poor shedding, and difficulty catching or swallowing prey, including a tongue that seems to miss or stick. **Why:** a diet short on vitamin A, common in frogs fed a limited, ungut-loaded diet. **What to do:** improve gut-loading with orange and green vegetables, and use a multivitamin with beta-carotene. Do not megadose, since too much preformed vitamin A is also harmful. **When to call a vet:** when symptoms appear. It needs a vet-guided correction.

Eye injuries

What you see: a cloudy, closed, or swollen eye, scratches, or a frog rubbing its face. **Why:** sharp décor, a fight with a tank mate, escaping crickets, or a collision with a lid. **What to do:** remove sharp objects, separate tank mates, and keep the frog in a clean, low-stress setup. **When to call a vet:** the same day. Eye problems progress quickly.

Overheating and stress

What you see: gaping mouth, frantic climbing, pale or ashy coloring, and a frog sitting in the water dish or pressed against the cool glass. **Why:** a tank over about 85°F, a lamp mounted too close, or a hot room. **What to do:** cool the enclosure immediately, mist, and move the frog out of direct heat. **When to call a vet:** if the frog is limp, unresponsive, or doesn't recover within an hour.

Quick reference

What you see	Likely cause	What to do	Vet urgency
Rubbery jaw, twitching limbs	Metabolic bone disease	Fix supplements and gut-load; add zone 1 UVB	Within days
Fat rolls above the eyes	Obesity	Cut portions, drop fatty feeders	If no improvement in a couple of months
Red belly or thighs, lethargy	Red-leg	Quarantine, clean water	Same day
White or cottony patches	Fungal or skin infection	Improve airflow, quarantine	Within a day or two
Puffy, waterlogged body	Bloat or edema	Check water, quarantine	Same day

What you see	Likely cause	What to do	Vet urgency
Stuck or flaky skin	Shedding trouble, low humidity	Raise humidity, gentle soak	If it persists 2-3 days
Weight loss, odd stool	Parasites	Fecal sample	Within a week
Excess shedding, sudden decline	Chytrid	Isolate	Immediately
Wrinkled skin, sunken eyes	Dehydration	Mist, correct temperature	If no improvement in a day
Swollen eyes, missed prey	Vitamin A deficiency	Improve gut-load; vet-guided plan	When noticed
Cloudy or closed eye	Eye injury	Remove hazards	Same day
Gaping, pale, frantic	Overheating	Cool down immediately	If not recovered in an hour

SECTION 9

Handling

Minimal is the goal

Tree frogs are display animals first. Their skin is **thin and permeable**, meaning it absorbs whatever it touches, including oils, lotion, soap, and sanitizer residue. Skin secretions from the frog can also irritate your eyes and mouth. Plan to handle your frog only when necessary, such as moving it for cleaning, a vet visit, or a health check. **Red-eyed tree frogs are best not handled at all.** Whites tolerate brief, calm handling better than any other species, and some green tree frogs will tolerate a moment on a hand, but never treat a frog as a cuddle pet.

Safe technique

1. **Wash your hands with plain water, or with unscented soap and a long, thorough rinse.** No lotion, no sanitizer residue.
2. **Wet your hands with dechlorinated water.** Dry hands stick to skin and can tear it. Powder-free gloves, wet, are also fine.
3. **Approach slowly from the side**, never swooping from above.
4. **Cup, don't squeeze.** Let the frog walk onto a flat, wet palm. Keep your other hand nearby as a "wall" to prevent leaps.
5. **Keep it brief and low.** Stay close to a soft surface in case the frog jumps.
6. **Return the frog to its enclosure and wash your hands again**, thoroughly, with soap.

Hygiene and Salmonella

Amphibians can carry **Salmonella**, with no sign of illness. Wash your hands after any contact with the frog, its water, or the enclosure. Keep the tank out of kitchens and away from food preparation. Clean any equipment in a utility sink or bathtub, not the kitchen sink.

Children

Children can enjoy a tree frog from the right distance. Young kids, anyone with a weakened immune system, and pregnant people should avoid handling and wash hands after any contact with the enclosure. Teach older children the "wet hands, short time, wash after" rule. Let them help with misting and watching, which is the heart of the hobby anyway.

SECTION 10

Routine Care Calendar

How often	What to do
Daily	Mist the enclosure in the evening (and lightly in the morning); check temperature and humidity readings
Daily	Replace the water in the dish with fresh, dechlorinated water
Daily	Feed according to the schedule and remove uneaten feeders by morning
Daily	Spot-clean droppings and uneaten food
Daily	Check that the lamp timers and lighting cycle are working
Daily	Observe the frog at night for alertness, posture, skin, eyes, and body shape
Weekly	Scrub and rinse the water dish; wipe the glass
Weekly	Stir the surface substrate and check for mold or sour smells
Weekly	Check the stability of perches and the security of the lid
Weekly	Restock and gut-load feeders; clean the feeder container
Monthly	Weigh the frog and look for fat rolls or weight loss
Monthly	Prune and care for live plants; replace damaged leaves
Monthly	Wipe down décor and check supplement stock
Every 3-4 months	Replace the substrate in a non-bioactive setup
Every 6-12 months	Replace the UVB lamp per manufacturer guidance
Annually	Amphibian-experienced vet checkup and a fecal exam

SECTION 11

When to See a Vet

Frogs are small and good at hiding illness, and they can decline fast. Find a vet who treats amphibians (the Association of Reptile and Amphibian Veterinarians keeps a directory), and call before you have an emergency. **When in doubt, call.**

Go today:

- Red patches on the belly or thighs, especially with lethargy
- Open-mouth breathing, gasping, or wheezing
- Cloudy, closed, or swollen eyes
- A swollen, waterlogged body
- Limp, unresponsive, or unable to right itself
- Seizures, spasms, or tremors
- A frog with an open wound, bleeding, or tissue protruding from the vent
- Sudden unexplained skin sloughing or white, fuzzy patches
- Heat exposure over 85°F, or a frog that doesn't recover after cooling

Book within a few days:

- Soft jaw or limb twitching
- Stuck shed for more than three days
- Weight loss, loose stools, or no appetite for more than a week
- Repeatedly missing prey or struggling to swallow
- Persistent dull, pale, or very dark color paired with lethargy
- Lumps or bumps anywhere on the body

Bring a photo of the enclosure, your temperature and humidity readings, your feeding and supplement schedule, and a fresh fecal sample in a clean container.

SECTION 12

FAQ

What do tree frogs eat?

Tree frogs eat live insects. The best staples are crickets, dubia roaches and other small roaches, flies, moths, and silkworms, all sized no wider than the gap between the frog's eyes. Hornworms and waxworms are treats only because they are fatty. Gut-load the insects for 24 to 48 hours before feeding, dust most meals with plain calcium without D3, and use a multivitamin on a regular schedule. Never feed wild-caught insects, fireflies, or human food.

How long do tree frogs live?

It depends on the species. A White's tree frog commonly lives **15 to 20 years or more** with good care, which makes it a very long commitment. American green tree frogs and red-eyed tree frogs more typically live about 5 to 10 years. Consistent temperature and humidity, clean water, a measured diet, minimal handling, and an amphibian-experienced vet all stretch those numbers.

What size tank does a tree frog need?

A tree frog needs a tall tank, not a wide one. For one or two small frogs (American green or red-eyed), the minimum is about 18" x 18" x 24" tall. For a White's tree frog or a group, use 24" x 18" x 36" tall. Use a secure screen top with good ventilation, and fill the height with branches, vines, and broad-leaf plants.

Do tree frogs need UVB?

Many keepers have raised tree frogs without it, but low-level UVB (Ferguson zone 1) is increasingly recommended because it supports vitamin D3 production and calcium use. If you add it, choose a low-output fixture, mount it over one end of the enclosure, and provide plenty of leaf cover so the frog can always retreat into shade. If you skip UVB, a careful calcium and vitamin D3 supplement schedule becomes more important, so ask your vet to help you plan it.

What humidity do tree frogs need?

White's and American green tree frogs do best at about 50-70% humidity, while red-eyed tree frogs prefer 60-80%. Aim for a cycle rather than a constant: mist in the evening so humidity rises, and let it drift down during the day so surfaces dry out. Good ventilation prevents stagnant air that encourages bacterial and fungal problems. Use dechlorinated water and a digital hygrometer to check your numbers.

Can you handle a tree frog?

Only minimally. Their thin, permeable skin absorbs oils, lotions, and soap, and their skin secretions can irritate your eyes and mouth. If you must handle one, use clean, wet, powder-free hands, keep it brief, and wash your hands afterward. White's tolerate it best, while red-eyed tree frogs are best not handled at all.

What is the best tree frog for beginners?

The White's tree frog is the usual first choice because it is large, calm, and forgiving, though you need to commit to a 15 to 20 year lifespan and watch its weight. The American green tree frog is a close second, hardy, communal, and inexpensive to house. Red-eyed tree frogs are beautiful but more delicate and humidity-hungry, so they suit a keeper with a little experience.

How often do you feed a tree frog?

Juveniles eat daily. Adult American green and red-eyed tree frogs eat about every other day, and adult White's tree frogs eat only 2 to 3 times a week because they are so prone to obesity. Feed in the evening, offer a few appropriately sized insects, and remove leftovers by morning. If you see fat rolls above the eyes, cut back.

Can tree frogs live together?

Sometimes. Only house the same species together, and only frogs of similar size, since larger frogs will eat smaller ones. American green and red-eyed tree frogs are communal and do well in groups. Whites can share if the enclosure is generous, with plenty of perches and hides. Always watch for bullying, uneven feeding, and weight differences, and be prepared to separate them.

Why is my tree frog changing color?

Tree frogs shift shade with temperature, light, and mood, so some color change is normal. A White's might look green, brown, gray-blue, or tan, and a green tree frog can look bright green by day and olive at night. A frog that looks darker when cool or stressed and brighter when warm and relaxed is usually fine. Worry if it stays very pale, very dark, or patchy and is also lethargic, off its food, or showing skin changes. In that case check temperature and humidity and call your vet.

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Not sure this is the right pet? Compare your options in our *Amphibian Guide*.

SECTION 13

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That matters to us as tree frog keepers, too. Please buy captive-bred frogs, never take one from the wild, and never release a pet outdoors. If life changes and a frog needs a new home, a reptile and amphibian rescue can help.

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Welcome to the quiet, leafy, wonderfully nocturnal world of the tree frog.

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