

Sulcata Tortoise

Scientific Name: *Geochelone centrochelys sulcata*
Native to: Southern edge of the Sahara Desert in Africa
Maximum Length: 2.5 feet
Life Span: 70+ years.

Characteristics:

Sulcata tortoises, also known as African spurred tortoise, are the third largest tortoise species. They grow up to 80 – 110 lbs. Some males will reach up to 200 lbs. These tortoises tend to be docile yet curious. They can easily flip themselves over or get stuck in places too small for them. Sulcata Tortoises at a young age should not be handled regularly. This can cause stress for them.

Care tips:

Enclosure: Adult Sulcata's need an enclosure space of at least 16 ft x 20 ft. The larger the space the better. These tortoises grow pretty fast so if you are starting with a baby tortoise you may be increasing the tank size every one to two years. Baby Sulcata tortoises need at least a 48 in. x 18 in. enclosure. If you are keeping your Sulcata outside they need at least a two-foot fence. They like to burrow so the fence should be extended underground.

Substrate: It is good to use substrate that can hold a lot of humidity. Cypress mulch, Eco-Earth, Forest Floor, Repti-Bark, and coco coir work well together.

Habitat: When housing young Sulcata's, it is important to have optimal humidity in order to prevent pyramiding. Using a chamber enclosure or hideout can help contain this humidity. Try to maintain 80% humidity. They also need a large enough water dish that they can soak themselves and defecate in.

Temperature and Lighting: Lighting should be on for 10-12 hours a day to mimic natural light. The basking area of the enclosure should be 100°F. The ambient temperature of the enclosure should be around 80-90°F. Night temperatures shouldn't drop below 70°F. Tortoises need UV full spectrum lighting if being kept indoors.

Food and Water: A water dish that is big enough for the tortoise to fit in should be provided so that they can soak. Baby tortoises should be soaked 20-30 minutes a day in warm water. Sulcata Tortoises are primarily grass eaters. A healthy diet consists of 80% grass, weeds, and hay. Variations of these keep your tortoise healthy. The other 20% can be filled with vegetables such as carrots.

Safe Grass: Barley, Bermuda, buffalo, fescue, Kentucky blue, oat, orchard, rye, timothy, and wheat grass.

Safe Weeds: Cats ear, chia, chick weed, clovers, dandelion, geranium, mallow, moringa, nettles, plantains (broadleaf/narrow leaf), and sow thistle.

Safe Plants: Grapevine, hostas, hibiscus leaves, honeysuckles, and mulberry leaves.

Safe Grocery Store Lettuces: Arugula, collard greens, endive, escarole, grape leaf, oakleaf, radicchio, and spring mix lettuces.

Cuttle bone is a great source of calcium. Not all tortoises will eat this, but it is good to have inside their enclosure.