



CONCISE CARE SHEETS

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A N T I L L E S

P I N K - T O E T A R A N T U L A

INTRO

The Antilles (or Martinique) "pink-toe" or tree tarantula (*Caribena versicolor*) is a gorgeous, colorful, arboreal species from the tropical islands of the Lesser Antilles (Martinique and Guadeloupe). This technicolor species makes an excellent display tarantula. It's fairly docile, but tends to be very jumpy/flighty and difficult to handle. As mentioned in the Spiderling Housing section below, the key to raising young "versis" is to ensure they stay hydrated without causing stagnant conditions. Misting with lukewarm water (spraying enclosure/plants/silk retreat, but never the spider directly!) is the standard way to keep humidity elevated and provide droplets of water for the spider drink. However, this should be done moderately and frequently so that over-dampness does not occur.

GENERAL CARE & ENVIRONMENT

Although many tarantulas can be housed at warm room temperature, "pink-toes" are true tropical tarantulas that thrive best at slightly warmer temperatures. Many keepers have warm and humid rooms for their reptiles and inverts that work quite well, but when housed in cooler areas in most homes supplemental heat in the form of a low-wattage red bulb may be necessary.

A well-ventilated cage that allows the moisture to dry within 24 hours is essential. Re-spraying to add humidity/moisture every day or so is easy; breaking down and cleaning a cage to remove soggy substrate from over watering is hard! And the latter conditions can prove fatal to your spider. In general, the humidity requirements of this species are exaggerated. A cage never need to be very humid, with condensation and dampness. If your versi is well-fed, and therefore well-hydrated, it will be more tolerant of slightly dry conditions than overly humid conditions.

SPIDERLING HOUSING

Spiderlings may be housed in a variety of containers (see Raising Young Tarantulas), but we prefer the following set-up: a 16-24 oz. deli cup half filled with slightly damp substrate and covered with a layer of moist sphagnum moss, with a sprig of artificial plant and an insect cup lid. This type of lid and cup provides excellent ventilation, whereas there is a significant risk of having too much moisture/humidity in the standard "spiderling vial". "Versi" spiderlings have an undeserved reputation for being difficult to raise. The primary reason some keepers have had high mortality is that they are keeping them too moist and the spiders are succumbing to stagnant conditions. Yes, this is a tropical rainforest species that requires high humidity, but humidity must never be provided at the cost of good ventilation. A vial or small jar with a few pinholes is just not well-ventilated enough. These containers are great for desert and temperate species and even tropical burrowing tarantulas, but for a tropical arboreal spiderling there is too great a risk of over-dampness. Remember: it's easy to add more humidity/moisture, but very difficult to remove excess humidity/moisture. A well-ventilated container provides the opportunity for drying within 24 hours of misting, and a deep layer of substrate allows for a moisture reserve at the bottom of the strata and drier conditions above in the environment where the spider lives. Frequent feeding of small meals (one body-length cricket every 3-5 days) will keep a spider well-hydrated and minimize the risk of desiccation and allow for less frequent or less heavy misting.

JUVENILE AND ADULT HOUSING

Caribena versicolor is particularly well-suited to beautiful natural vivaria. After rearing juveniles in half-gallon or gallon jars (or Kritter Keeper™ style cages), a tall well-planted vivarium (terrarium) is an exceptional adult enclosure. See our **ARBOREAL TARANTULA CARE AND HOUSING** guide for description of these enclosures.

FOOD & WATER

Antilles Pink-toes will feed on a variety of arthropods and even small vertebrates. A cricket (or two) no larger than the length of the spider's body once a week is fine for young specimens. Juveniles will accept several half-grown crickets and the occasional moth. Adults do fine on crickets and/

QUICK TIPS

- » 76-82°F with a drop in temperature at night (72-76°F) OK but not necessary.
- » Requires 70-80% humidity, but also good ventilation.
- » Eats arthropods and small vertebrates and thrives on roaches or crickets in captivity.

or roaches, but breeding females may benefit from the occasional vertebrate like an anole or house gecko. A weekly meal is sufficient. Water is mostly obtained from the food, but pink-toes may drink water droplets during occasional habitat misting and a slight spray once a week is recommended for young specimens (see notes above in **INTRO** and **GENERAL CARE & ENVIRONMENT** sections regarding ensuring adequate ventilation and avoiding excessive humidity). A water

bowl would only be used in dire emergency and is only suggested for adults, but is a good safety net. Some keepers use elevated water bowls that affix with a suction cup to the side of the terrarium or similarly attach a small plastic condiment cup using hot glue.

SHEDDING

Adult tarantulas molt their skins approximately once a year, but young growing spiders will do so much more often based on food intake. When the abdomen becomes fully expanded the spider will cease feeding and will become dark and have a dull shininess. At this point more frequent misting is advisable to elevate humidity and ensure no troubles during ecdysis (exoskeleton sloughing).

HANDLING

Tarantulas are delicate invertebrates that may be fatally injured by a fall. They are hands-off terrarium pets best left alone. Although some pink-toed tarantulas can be very calm and even docile, Antilles Pink-toes are usually more nervous and may be defensive. They should be handled minimally or left alone. The well-known spider trapping technique using cup and a piece of cardboard to slide between surface and cup to cover the opening may be used to trap them safely to move them to a new enclosure.

SPECIAL NOTE

The common "Pink-toe" (*Avicularia avicularia*) and some other members of the genus *Avicularia* are known for being rare exceptions to the one spider per cage rule. These Avics can be housed communally with some success. This doesn't seem to hold true for the related *Caribena*. *Caribena versicolor* must be housed individually! It has the cannibalistic tendencies of the majority of tarantulas and cannot be housed together at any age. Even spiderlings will soon feed on their siblings.

ARBOREAL TARANTULA HUSBANDRY DETAILS

For more detailed information on housing and caring for *Avicularia* & *Caribena* species and other arboreal tarantulas please refer to our four-page **ARBOREAL TARANTULA CARE AND HOUSING** guide.

