

Bamboo Shrimp - care guide

Atyopsis moluccensis

A large, peaceful filter feeder that catches food from the current with fans instead of grazing. Hardy and long-lived, but starves quietly in a tank that's too clean - the most common way they're lost.

At a glance

Difficulty: Intermediate

Adult size: 5-10cm

Lifespan: 2-5 years

Water parameters

Temperature: 23-27°C

pH: 6.5-7.5

GH: 6-15

KH: 2-10

TDS: 150-350

These are the ranges to aim for, not the extremes they can survive. Shrimp are far more sensitive to sudden change than to imperfect conditions - stability matters more than hitting an exact number.

Keeping them

Bamboo Shrimp - also sold as Wood Shrimp, Fan Shrimp or Singapore Flower Shrimp - are unlike every other shrimp on this site. They don't graze. They perch somewhere with good flow, open four feathery fans, and filter food out of the passing water.

That single fact drives everything about keeping them, and it's where most of them are lost. A spotless, well-filtered planted tank is a starvation environment for a filter feeder. They don't decline dramatically; they slowly thin out over months while their keeper thinks everything is fine.

They need a mature tank with genuine current - a filter outflow or a small powerhead they can sit in front of. Watch where they choose to perch and you'll learn where the flow actually is.

Size makes them a striking centrepiece: adults reach 10cm including fans, far larger than any dwarf shrimp. They're entirely peaceful and won't touch plants, fish or other shrimp.

Minimum 75 litres, mostly for water stability rather than swimming room. They're sensitive to the parameter swings a small tank produces.

One behaviour worth expecting: a Bamboo Shrimp that starts crawling around picking at the substrate is hungry, not settling in. It has given up on filter feeding because there's nothing in the water. Treat it as the warning it is.

Water

Undemanding on numbers, demanding on stability and flow.

Flow is a care requirement, not a preference. Without current they cannot feed. Aim for a visible stream they can sit in - this is the one species here where "too much filtration" is not really possible.

Warmer than Neocaridina. 24-26°C suits them; below 22°C they become sluggish and feed poorly.

Ordinary treated tap water in a hard-water area is fine. They tolerate a wide GH and are not remotely as fussy as Caridina.

No copper, as with all invertebrates.

Acclimatise very slowly - three hours minimum. They ship poorly for their size and often arrive stressed,

sometimes with damaged fans. Fans regenerate over a moult or two; a shrimp that has lost one is not doomed.

They are strong climbers and will explore filter outflows and open lids. Cover the tank.

Feeding

The whole of their care, really.

In a mature tank with fish, some food reaches them naturally - crushed flake, fine detritus, infusoria. In a sparse or heavily filtered tank, almost none does.

Feed them deliberately. Powdered or finely crushed food released upstream so it drifts past their fans: crushed flake, powdered spirulina, a purpose-made filter-feeder food, or the fine cloud from a crushed shrimp pellet. Two or three times a week.

A useful technique: turn the filter off, add the powder near the outflow, then turn it back on so the cloud sweeps past them.

Signs they're underfed: crawling and picking at the substrate rather than perching, thinning in the body, and pale colour. A well-fed Bamboo Shrimp sits with fans open in the current and looks solid rather than translucent.

They will not compete for sinking pellets and will be out-competed by every other shrimp in the tank. Feeding the tank is not the same as feeding them.

Telling males from females

Fan shrimp sex the opposite way round to everything else on this site, which catches people out.

With dwarf shrimp the female is the larger animal. With **Atyopsis**, males are typically the bigger and heavier-built of the two - and the reliable marker is the front legs.

Look at the first pair of walking legs, behind the feeding fans. On a male these are noticeably thicker and more robust, sometimes described as hooked; on a female they're slim and unremarkable. On a mature animal this is clear once you know to look.

There is no saddle to find. The saddle method depends on ovaries showing through a translucent carapace, and a Bamboo Shrimp's shell is far too heavy for that. Body-shape sexing doesn't work well either - they're bulky animals and the abdominal difference is slight.

As with Amano, sexing them changes nothing practical. They can't be bred in fresh water regardless of ratio, so there's no reason to select for a mix. Buy three or more because they're more confident in company, and don't worry about which you get.

Breeding

Not achievable in a home freshwater tank, for the same reason as Amano Shrimp - and any listing implying otherwise is worth questioning.

Females carry eggs readily. The larvae need brackish water to develop and die within days in fresh water. Completing the cycle needs a separate saltwater setup, staged salinity changes and specific larval foods; it's done commercially and by a handful of dedicated specialists.

Practically: every Bamboo Shrimp you buy was wild-caught or commercially bred, they will never populate your tank, and a berried female is not the start of anything. That's the species, not a failure.

Because most are wild-caught, arrival condition varies more than with tank-bred dwarf shrimp, and first-fortnight losses are higher. Worth asking a seller about source.

Tank mates

Their size makes them safe with almost anything peaceful, and their temperament makes them a threat to nothing.

Safe: tetras, rasboras, danios, corydoras, otocinclus, peaceful barbs, gouramis, and all dwarf shrimp.

Not safe: cichlids, large or aggressive fish, crayfish, and anything that might mistake a moulting shrimp for food. A freshly moulted Bamboo Shrimp is soft and defenceless for a day.

The real competition is for food, not safety. In a tank with lots of dwarf shrimp and heavy substrate feeding, the Bamboo Shrimp loses out - the others get to the food first and nothing reaches the water column. Keep that in mind when stocking.

They coexist happily with each other and are more confident in groups of three or more, which also makes their feeding behaviour much easier to observe.

Common problems

Slow decline over months. Starvation, nearly always. See the feeding section - this is the single biggest killer of the species and it's silent.

Crawling on the substrate instead of filtering. Hunger. Increase targeted feeding before assuming illness.

Missing or damaged fans. Usually shipping damage or a rough moult. They regrow. Not an emergency.

Sitting in a low-flow corner. Either the flow is too weak everywhere, or they're unwell. Check the filter first.

Sudden death after a water change. Parameter swing. They're large but not tolerant of rapid change.

Colour changing between red, brown and near-white. Normal. Bamboo Shrimp shift colour with mood, moult stage and surroundings; it isn't a health signal on its own.

Grades & buying

Not graded - a wild-type species kept for behaviour rather than colour, with no selective lines.

Price varies with size and source. Two things worth checking:

Species confusion is common. Several similar fan shrimp are sold interchangeably as "Bamboo Shrimp", including **Atyopsis spinipes**. Care is broadly the same, so this matters less than with Caridina, but a seller who knows which they have is a seller paying attention.

Wild-caught versus tank-bred. Most are wild-caught, which means variable condition on arrival and a higher first-fortnight loss rate. It's a fair question, and it's reasonable to prefer a seller who has held them for a few weeks before selling on.

Adults show a distinct pale stripe down the back and, on males, noticeably thicker front legs. Colour ranges from deep red-brown through to sandy - all normal, none an indicator of quality.

In the wild

Atyopsis moluccensis comes from fast-flowing streams and rivers across Southeast Asia - Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and neighbouring regions - where it perches on rocks and wood in the current with its fans open.

The current is not incidental, it is the food supply. These are filter feeders: they don't graze surfaces, they intercept particulate matter drifting past. A wild Bamboo Shrimp sits in a riffle where the water does the work of bringing food to it. That single fact explains nearly everything about keeping them - why flow is a care requirement rather than a preference, why a spotless well-filtered tank starves them, and why a shrimp crawling on the substrate picking at detritus is telling you it has given up.

Like Amano, they are amphidromous: larvae need brackish water downstream to develop, and juveniles migrate back up. Same consequence - they cannot complete their life cycle in a freshwater tank, and a berried female is not the start of a colony.

The streams they come from are warm, which is why they want 24-26°C rather than the cooler end Caridina prefer.

How it reached the hobby

Described as **Atyopsis moluccensis** (De Haan, 1849), and unlike almost everything else in this hobby it has no breeding history at all - because it has never been bred at scale in captivity.

Every Bamboo Shrimp in the trade is either wild-caught or from the small number of commercial operations able to run the brackish larval stage. There are no colour lines, no grades, no named breeders, and no selective breeding programme, for the straightforward reason that hobbyists cannot reproduce them.

That has two practical consequences worth knowing before buying. Arrival condition varies more than with tank-bred shrimp, and first-fortnight losses are correspondingly higher - a wild-caught animal has been through collection, export and multiple holding tanks before it reaches you. And it's a fair question to ask a seller whether stock is wild-caught and how long they've held it; a seller who has kept them for a few weeks before selling on has already absorbed the riskiest part.

They're sold under several names - Wood Shrimp, Fan Shrimp, Singapore Flower Shrimp, Flower Shrimp - and genuinely confused with related species including **Atyopsis spinipes**. Care is broadly the same across the group, so this matters less than the equivalent confusion in *Caridina*, but a seller who knows which they have is a seller paying attention.

Care advice is general guidance - if something in your tank disagrees with this guide, trust your own water tests. Read the latest version at shrimpbay.shop/species/bamboo-shrimp