

Taiwan Bee Shrimp - care guide

Caridina cantonensis

The high end of the hobby - Blue Bolts, Panda, King Kong, Wine Red. Same species as Crystal Reds and kept the same way, but less genetically robust, more expensive, and far less forgiving of drift.

At a glance

Difficulty: Advanced

Adult size: 2-3cm

Lifespan: 1.5-2 years

Water parameters

Temperature: 20-23°C

pH: 5.8-6.5

GH: 4-6

KH: 0-1

TDS: 100-140

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

"Taiwan Bee" covers a family of high-grade **Caridina cantonensis** colour morphs - Blue Bolt, Black King Kong, Panda, Wine Red, Shadow Panda and others. They are the most expensive shrimp most hobbyists will ever buy, and the most demanding in common circulation.

Care is essentially identical to Crystal Red Shrimp - RO water remineralised to a low GH, active soil holding pH in the low sixes, TDS around 100-140, temperature at the low end. Read the Crystal Red guide's water section; it applies here in full.

What differs is margin. Taiwan Bees carry the recessive genetics that produce their solid, opaque colouration, and that genetic narrowing costs them vigour. They are less tolerant of parameter drift, slower to breed, and more prone to unexplained losses than CRS of an equivalent grade. A CRS colony forgives a mistake that a Blue Bolt colony will not.

Do not keep these as a first Caridina. Establish a stable, breeding CRS colony through at least one full soil cycle first. The failure mode here is expensive.

Water

As Crystal Red Shrimp, with the tolerances tightened:

TDS 100-140, held tightly. Drift that a CRS colony shrugs off will suppress breeding here. Measure at the same time of day, every few days, and top up evaporation with pure RO only.

pH 5.8-6.5. Lower than typical CRS keeping, and dependent entirely on active soil, since KH is effectively zero.

Temperature 20-22°C. Taiwan Bees are notably heat-sensitive. Above 24°C, expect breeding to stop; sustained warmth above 26°C causes losses. In a UK summer, an unchilled tank in a warm room is a genuine risk that needs planning for.

Never mix water sources. Mixing a batch of remineralised RO to a target TDS and using only that is what makes these keepable at all. Topping up with anything else is how colonies are lost.

Established, mature tanks only. A Taiwan Bee colony introduced to a tank less than two or three months old

rarely establishes - they need a developed biofilm and a settled soil, and there is no way to hurry either.

Feeding

Sparse, high-quality feeding. Biofilm is the foundation; supplementary food two or three times a week in small amounts.

Indian almond leaves and other botanicals (alder cones, oak leaf) are close to essential rather than optional. They support the biofilm shrimplets depend on, contribute mild antibacterial tannins, and help hold pH down.

Underfeed rather than overfeed. In a zero-KH tank, the water-quality consequences of decaying food arrive quickly and without the buffering that would soften them elsewhere.

Specialised Caridina foods are worth the money at this level, mostly because they foul the water less than generic alternatives.

Telling males from females

The hardest shrimp on this site to sex, and the ones where getting it wrong costs most.

They are **Caridina cantonensis**, so the markers are the same as Crystal Reds - saddle, belly depth, size. The problem is that Taiwan Bee colouration is dense and opaque by design. The whole point of a Blue Bolt or a Black King Kong is solid, deep colour with no translucency, and that is precisely what makes a saddle invisible. On a good Black King Kong you will not see one at all.

Body shape is effectively the only marker, and it needs an adult animal and a comparison. A mature female is rounder and deeper through the abdomen; a male is slim and straight-sided. Side by side it is clear. On a single animal in a planted tank, it often isn't.

Two consequences worth taking seriously at this price point:

Buy groups, never pairs. Ten or more gives you both sexes with near-certainty. Anyone offering you a sexed pair of juvenile Taiwan Bees is either guessing or hoping.

Be sceptical of guaranteed ratios. A seller offering "6 females, 4 males" on animals this hard to sex is making a claim they cannot reliably support. A good seller will tell you they can't guarantee it.

Breeding

Slower and less reliable than CRS, and that is inherent to the genetics rather than a sign of poor keeping.

Clutches are smaller - often 15-20 - and shrimplet survival is lower. A stable, well-run Taiwan Bee colony grows steadily but unspectacularly; anyone expecting Neocaridina-like multiplication will be disappointed.

The genetics are the interesting part and the difficult part. Taiwan Bee traits are recessive. Crossing a Taiwan Bee with a Crystal Red produces "mischling" offspring - visually often CRS-like, but carrying Taiwan Bee genes. Breeding mischlings together throws a percentage of true Taiwan Bees. This is how the line is maintained and outcrossed for vigour, and it is a serious, long-term project rather than a side effect of keeping them.

Different Taiwan Bee morphs interbreed freely and produce mixed, often muddled offspring. Keep morphs separate if you care about the line.

Do not expect breeding in the first few months. These need a fully settled tank, and rushing it is the most common reason a colony never gets going.

Tank mates

Species-only. This is not a strong recommendation; it is close to the only sensible answer.

The water is unsuitable for almost all fish, the shrimp are extremely valuable, and the shrimplets are small and slow-growing. There is no tankmate whose benefit justifies the risk.

Snails are the reasonable exception - nerites will not breed at this pH, and ramshorns or bladder snails are harmless and help process leaf litter.

Do not mix with *Neocaridina* (incompatible water), and mix with CRS only if you intend to breed mischlings deliberately and understand what that does to both lines.

Common problems

Colony never establishes. Usually a tank that was too young. Taiwan Bees need a mature, biologically settled system - two to three months minimum, and longer is better.

Slow attrition with no obvious cause. TDS or pH drift, or a soil approaching exhaustion. Track parameters over time rather than spot-checking; the pattern is what tells you, not any single reading.

Summer losses. Heat. Plan cooling before you need it - a clip fan across the water surface and a slightly lowered water level will typically buy 2-3°C.

Breeding stops entirely. Temperature first, then TDS, then soil age.

Losses on arrival. Expected to be higher than any other shrimp discussed here. These ship poorly, and even a good seller with good stock will see occasional arrival losses. Drip acclimatise over at least three hours, into a mature tank, and buy from sellers who match your parameters closely - ask what TDS and pH their tank runs at before ordering, and expect a serious seller to know.

Grades & buying

Taiwan Bee naming describes pattern and colour rather than a quality ladder, so the names are categories, not grades - though within each, coverage and opacity drive price.

Common morphs: Blue Bolt (blue gradient over white, deepest at the head), Black King Kong (near-solid black), Panda (crisp black and white banding), Wine Red (deep opaque red-black), Shadow Panda, Red Wine, Zebra variants.

Within a morph, value comes from opacity, coverage and crispness of the boundary between colours. A Blue Bolt with deep colour running well down the body is worth several times one where blue is confined to the head.

Two buying cautions specific to this tier. First, photographs mislead more here than anywhere else in the hobby - blues in particular shift dramatically under different lighting, and colour-corrected plant lights flatter them enormously. Ask for images under neutral white light.

Second, ask about the tank's parameters, not just the animals. Taiwan Bees moved between substantially different TDS or pH regimes suffer, and a seller who cannot tell you their numbers is not a seller to buy this tier of animal from.

In the wild

Taiwan Bees are colour morphs of **Caridina cantonensis** - the same species as Crystal Reds - so the wild habitat is the same: shaded, soft, acidic forest streams in southern China, running over granite and leaf litter.

No Taiwan Bee exists in the wild. Blue Bolt, Black King Kong, Panda, Wine Red and the rest are all products of selective breeding from captive stock, several steps removed from anything that ever lived in a stream. That distance is worth holding onto, because it explains their fragility: these are among the most heavily selected freshwater invertebrates in the trade, and the vigour lost along the way is the price of the colour.

Read the Crystal Red guide's habitat section for the detail on why soft acidic water, leaf litter and cool temperatures matter. All of it applies here, with less margin.

How it reached the hobby

Taiwan Bees emerged from Taiwanese breeding programmes in the mid-to-late 2000s, developed out of the same **C. cantonensis** stock that produced Crystal Reds - and, as the name suggests, Taiwan rather than Japan was the centre of that work.

Individual attribution is poor and the timeline is approximate. Specific breeders are named in forum accounts and shop copy, inconsistently, and the lines were commercially valuable enough that the people producing them had little incentive to publish their methods. Treat any confident claim about who first produced a Blue

Bolt with scepticism - including confident claims to the contrary.

What is well established is the genetics, because the hobby had to work them out to keep the lines going. Taiwan Bee traits are recessive. Crossing a Taiwan Bee with a Crystal Red produces "mischling" offspring - often CRS-looking, but carrying Taiwan Bee genes - and breeding mischlings together throws a percentage of true Taiwan Bees. That's not a curiosity: it's the standard method for outcrossing fresh vigour into a line that inbreeding has weakened, and it's why serious Taiwan Bee keeping is a multi-generation project rather than a purchase.

The commercial consequence is visible in prices. A single high-grade Blue Bolt has sold for more than a tank of Neocaridina, and the market has been volatile enough over the years to make anyone treating these as an investment look unwise.

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/taiwan-bee-shrimp