



# The Raleigh Aquarium Society

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## May 1st, 2008

*Next Meeting: Thursday @7:30pm June 5th, 2008.*

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at the [North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine](#) located at [4700 Hillsborough Street in Raleigh](#). Visitors are welcome! Snacks and light refreshments are provided. A raffle of fish and fish related items follow the meeting. Due to Security Issues, NCSU has required that the doors going into the downstairs lobby remain locked. Please be on time, as we will have a designated person standing by the door to let you in. If you are late, you may try knocking or call Linda Twaddle at 919-880-3782 or John Patterson at 919-264-4011.

## Meeting Agenda

### Q & A the RAS Experts

It's been a few months since our last panel discussion and judging from questions at the monthly meetings, it's time for another round. If you've got a puzzling situation and need an answer, this is your chance. Also, if you've spawned something unusual and have a few pictures to share (electronically), bring 'em. This is an easy way to satisfy the reporting requirements for Breeders Award Points. Finally, bring those extra raffle donations. We're sure to have another huge monthly raffle.

# Monthly Feature

## ARTICLE INFORMATION:

**Author:** Tom Haupenthal

**Title:** Driftwood Dos and Don'ts

**Summary:** Tom answers some of the common questions that are asked about driftwood: curing it; brown water/tannin problems; types of suitable wood; sinking it.

### Contact for editing purposes:

**email:** Tom, at: [Fish2Friends@gmail.com](mailto:Fish2Friends@gmail.com)

**Date first published:** 2004

**Publication:** Tom's website: [www.Fish2Friends.com](http://www.Fish2Friends.com)

### Reprinted from Aquarticles:

January 2005: *Newsletter* of the Lorain County Aq. Soc.

January 2005: *Aqua Babble*, Aquarium Club of Edmonton

February 2005: *The Tank*, Northeast Philadelphia Aq. Soc.

March 2005: *The Fishmonger*, Vancouver Aquatic Hobbyist Club

March 2005: translated into Hebrew language on *Aqua.org.il* of Tel Aviv, at:

<http://www.aqua.org.il/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=443>

November 2005: *Underwater*, Iowa Aquarium Association

## ARTICLE USE:

### *Internet publication (club or non-profit web site):*

1. **Credit** author, original publication, and Aquarticles.
2. **Link** to <http://www.aquarticles.com> and original website if applicable.
3. **Advise Aquarticles**

### *Printed publication:*

#### **Mail one printed copy to each of:**

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## Driftwood Dos & Don'ts

by Tom Haupenthal

from his website [www.Fish2Friends.com](http://www.Fish2Friends.com)

Aquarticles.com

If you have ever visited a fish message board like [Fish2Friends Message Board](#), then you have probably seen questions about driftwood from time to time. In this article I hope to answer some of these questions, as well as put a few myths to rest. If I can help to enlighten even one person then the time I spent compiling and writing this article was well worth it. As with everything in this hobby the information may or may not work for you or in your situation.



*Photo by: Yvonne Garcia*

The most common question asked regarding driftwood is: **"I found this really cool piece of driftwood at the (insert wherever you found it) and I want to put it in my tank. How do I cure it?"** No matter what method you decide to use, scrub your driftwood first. This will get rid of anything loose on it. There are quite a few answers to this question.

One way is to boil the piece for a few hours (I've seen some people say up to 8 hours) then to soak it until the piece rests on the bottom of the soaking container (changing the water everyday or every couple of days at the most). Personally I like the boil/soak method, although this takes time so you need to be patient. Another way is to soak it in a bleach/water mixture (1 cup bleach/5 gallons water) for a few days. Of course bleach is poison, so if you are a kid get an adult's help to do this with proper protective equipment and ventilation. Consider rotating the piece around occasionally in the bleach, as it seems to be more effective. Then rinsing it for a few days, by soaking it (again changing the water daily). I would NOT recommend the bleach/water thing, as I don't like to take the chance that the bleach wasn't rinsed out and therefore could get into the tank, possibly killing the fish (see my exception to this below). I've also seen a person suggest putting it in an oven on 200°F for a few hours, thus killing any little bugs living in it. This idea also solves the bleach concern listed above. As a former firefighter, I would also tell you that this could cause the piece to start on fire, possibly even burning your house down if you don't watch it real carefully. If you use the oven idea please watch the oven at all times. Another suggestion is to just weight the piece down and throw it in the tank.

The next most common question goes something like this: **"I put some driftwood I found into my tank and now the water is turning brown, what is it?"**

The brown is the tannic acid leaching out of the piece into the water. Some people like this because it gives them a "black water effect". The leaching can continue for months or years after you introduce the piece to your tank. Another reason I like the boil/soak method listed in the last question is I think it helps to decrease the amount of tannic acid that leaches out once the piece is in the tank. One other way to reduce this "black water effect" is to do more frequent/larger (percentage) water changes. It has also been noted that the tannic acid can lower the pH in your tank. If you are concerned about this, then keep an eye on your pH level with regular testing. Another suggestion is to find a piece that has been "weathered", supposedly the piece will contain less tannic acid, as it will have already leached out during the "weathering" process. You can also add another carbon cartridge to your filter system to help clear up the staining. Remember to

change your carbon cartridge more often if you have a very active leaching piece.

After the questions listed above there are many different ones that pop up from time to time. Some of those are listed here:

**"I found a piece of pine and want to use that. Is that ok?"**

The answer is NO. You should only use hardwoods (oak, maple, ash, elm or hickory) for your aquarium. The sap and pitch in the softwoods can and most likely will create a syrupy mess in your tank. The soft woods will also decay easier than a hardwood. If you have a difficult time telling which type you have I suggest you use the following method. After the piece is dry, take the edge of your fingernail and depress it in to the piece. If it goes in easy then you have softwood. Get yourself another piece.

**"I soaked my driftwood for months and it still won't sink to the bottom of the tank."**

Fortunately there are a few ways to make it sink. One way is to use some fishing line and tie a plant to it for added weight (and beauty). Or you could silicone (make sure you use an aquarium safe silicone) it to a piece of slate (if you like the look) or to some flat pieces of plastic (then bury the plastic in your substrate). Some people have used titanium or stainless steel lag bolts embedded in the wood to weight it down. I would not do this, as I don't want anything metal introduced into my tanks. I also heard of one person that drilled some holes in the bottom of a piece then filled it with molten lead to make it sink. You could then silicone over the lead to seal it from the water.

**"I read (heard) that driftwood is good for my plecostomus. Why?"**

From my research this is true. It seems that plecos rasp fibers off the wood and break it down for the cellulose. As I understand it, it helps their digestive system. I guess it is similar to fiber in a human's diet. Unfortunately I have found very little information on the internet regarding this.

**"Can you use driftwood from saltwater for a fresh water tank?"**

Yes, you can use driftwood from the ocean for a freshwater tank. Remember that exception I mentioned before? Here it is - for a piece from the ocean I would use the bleach/water mixture just to be sure that nothing bad got into my tank. I did this with a piece and have had no ill effects from it. I did however make sure that I rinsed the piece very well before putting it in the tank.

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# Fishy Reading

## Aquarium Q & A

Keeping in the vein of asking question about fish keeping, I can think of two classics. Most people would think “Oh this is going to be a review of an Axelrod, Innes, Baensch, or such author’s book” All those authors have written (or published) great books on the hobby. But I go first to one of my two favorite aquarium books.

The first is not a new book and can be a little difficult to find. It is *1001 Questions Answered About Your Aquarium* by Ida Mellen and Robert J. Lanier and was originally published in 1935. If you come across a copy in a used book store, buy it. You will not be disappointed. The book actually has 1074 questions answered and gives good advice on fish keeping (but of course some of it is dated). But it also is a great glimpse of where we have come from and how many of the observations of the day are still important in our hobby today. This volume gives us a great window into how much things have changed and how well these aquarist pioneers had things on straight.

Another one of my favorite “general books” is *The Complete Aquarium* by J van Ramshorst. This was translated into English and published in the mid 1990s and is a hard back volume of nearly 400 pages. The book is very broad in its coverage of species (it even includes killies) and gives a good introduction to plants. This is another one of those books you will find yourself going back to again and again.

Until next month, keep reading.

John Jankowski

# Trading Post

I am doing spring cleaning on my pond and I have some nice giant val that I will bring to the RAS meeting. Please bring a plastic bag and let me know you want some. Bob Gillen: [chiller919@aol.com](mailto:chiller919@aol.com)

15 F1 Mpimbwe Frontosas 4" - 6" \$300  
Liston Cyrus Phone: 919 270-9379 or 919 404-6238

# Monthly Web Links

**Raleigh Aquarium Society Forum** on Yahoo Groups  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/raleighaquariumsociety/>

**Potomac Valley Aquarium Society** in the Washington D.C. area <http://www.pvas.com/>

**Atlanta Area Aquarium Association** in Atlanta, Georgia <http://www.atlantaaquarium.com/>

**Carolina Fish Talk** <http://www.carolinafishtalk.com/>

**Charlotte Area Aquarists Society** <http://pvelasco.net/CAASBBS/index.php>

**Marine Aquarium Society of the Carolinas** <http://masotc.net/>

**North Carolina Koi & Watergarden Society** <http://www.nckws.com/>

**Carolina Aquatic Plant Enthusiasts** <http://www.ncaquaticplants.org/>

**Aquatic Gardeners Association** <http://www.aquatic-gardeners.org/>

**KingFish Services** <http://www.kingfishservices.net/>



# Club Sponsors

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You may be asked to show your RAS membership card*

**[Aquatica](#)** 5533 NC Hwy 42-West, A-16, Garner (10%) **919.661.7790**

**[Critter Country Inc](#)** 14 Technology Drive, Garner (10%) **919.772.3761**

**[Down Under, Salt Water Fish & Corals](#)** 1543 US Highway 70 East in Garner. 20% on livestock, 15% on dry goods) **919.662.8820**

**[Fins, Furs & Feathers Pet Center](#)** 303 S. Horner Boulevard, Sanford, NC 27330 (10% on everything except tanks) **919.718.0850**

**[Fish Pros](#)** 5655 Western Boulevard, Suite A, Raleigh 27606 (10%) **919.233.1122**

**[Fish World](#)** 2205 Westinghouse Blvd., Suite 109, Suite 109, Raleigh (10%) **919.872.1228**

**[Pet Mania](#)** 7901 Falls of Neuse Rd #125, Raleigh (10%) **919.676.3225**

**[Pet Paradise](#)** 9101-141 Leesville Road, Raleigh (10%) **919.848.8881**

**[The Pet Pad](#)** 1347 Kildaire Farm Road, Cary, (10%) **919.481.6614**

**[Triangle Tropical Fish](#)** 3600 N. Duke St. Suite #36 Durham (10% excluding aquariums and stands) **919.479.0088**

Please contact John Jankowski at [raleighaquariumsociety@yahoo.com](mailto:raleighaquariumsociety@yahoo.com) if you are an active member of the Raleigh Aquarium Society and do not have an up to date membership card. Membership cards can be picked up at any meeting.

# Raleigh Aquarium Society

## Application for Membership

Membership privileges include:

- Ability to post items in trading post section of monthly newsletter
- A discount card good at participating local pet stores
- All club discounts on club functions
- Education from the most knowledgeable aquarium experts in NC
- Yearly Membership - \$15.00 (includes spouse and children)

(Membership dues run from March 1st each year. New members joining any other time will be pro-rated at \$3 + \$1 for each month remaining in the year.)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date to begin membership: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

New Membership

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Mail to:

Raleigh Aquarium Society  
PO Box 31564  
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