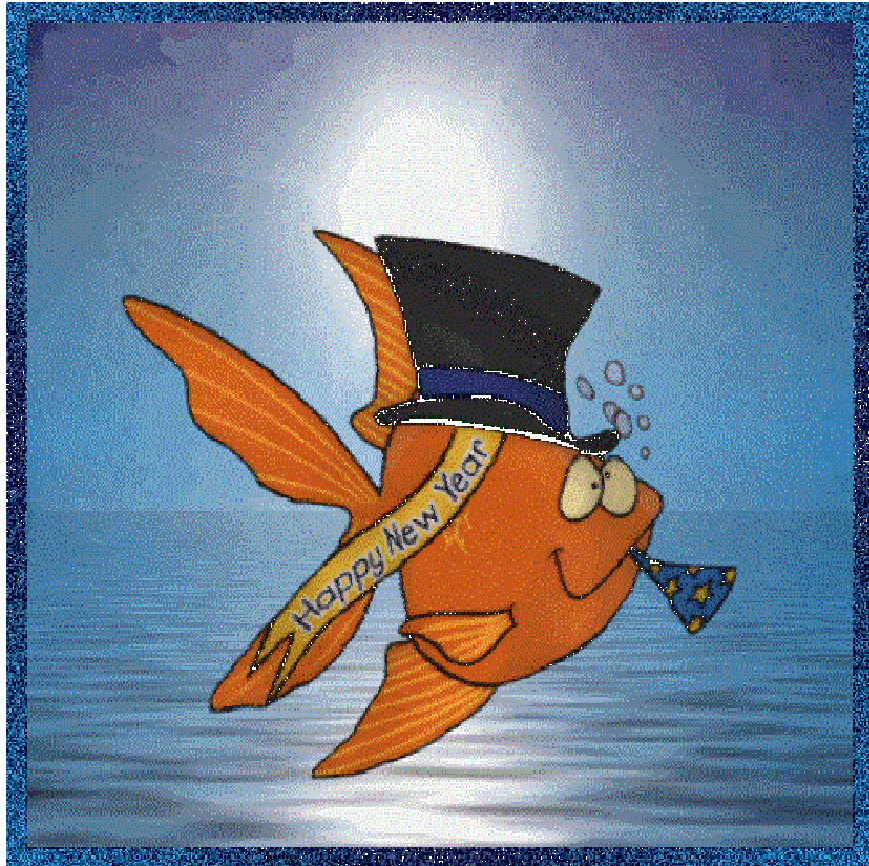


# B.R.A.S.S.

Barrie Region Aquarium Society of Simcoe



# Bulletin

Next Meeting  
January 8, 2013  
7:00pm - 9:00pm  
Maple Grove Public School

# The Mail Bag

## From the Desk of the President

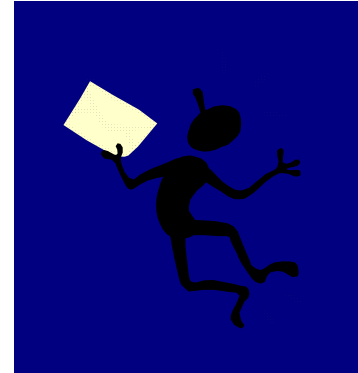
Hi All

Well, here we are, a brand new year. I hope everyone had a great Christmas. Santa was good to you and you found time to be with loved ones and your fish. (Not necessarily in that order) I guess it's not too late to wish everyone a Happy New Year and I hope this year is better than 2012. We're not superstitious about the number 13 are we? Hmmmm.

We had a good Christmas party last year. (Dec. 2012) It seemed like everyone wanted to stick around afterwards. Lots of goodies and lots of conversation.

Our executive meeting falls on the last Tuesday of the month... Uh that was Christmas. So if we moved it ahead to the next Tuesday ... Uh that's New Years Day. Not too sure what's happening on the next Tuesday evening... Uh that's our general meeting. Looking forward to seeing everyone at Tuesday's meeting to see if you look any better than you did last year. I know I sure haven't improved any. I know it's a disappointment to me as well, but at least my 120 gallon salt water tank is looking better. See you all Tuesday, not sure what we will be doing but you know it will have something to do with fish.

Doug Smith



## Blurb from the Editor

Here we are in 2013 and I am hoping the holidays were good to all of you.

Doug and I certainly had an interesting time. We have a new member in our family and thankfully things are going very well. We can tell you all about it when we see you next week.

Over the past month our family has learned the meaning of "it is better to give than to receive". I have also come to realize how much joy it can bring when you do something for someone else.

I wish for you, your loved ones and your fish a happy and healthy new year.

Kara Fleming



## Secretary's Report

Meeting of December 10, 2012 had 16 members present to enjoy our Christmas Party. Doug Fleming read the minutes from last month. We discussed our lack of a Web Page, we were unable to renew the existing page so we gave it up. Our new one will be under Doug Smith's web hosting and will only cost us \$20. a year for the domain name. Randy reported that Fish Fanatics is open now for business as a full line pet store; on Dixie Road north of 401. Randy says he could set us up a club day if we are interested.

Jeff and Leanne went to Ohio to Cichlid Convention. They had a great time and suggested we all should go. Very interesting and informative. We are still looking for a place to hold a fish auction, we decided in the spring. We need to check the CAOAC calendar to pick a date. We spent the rest of the meeting enjoying goodies, snacks and discussing our fish friends with whoever would listen! Good time had by all! See you at the next meeting. HAPPY NEW YEAR



### Executives

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Web Master	Gavin Steiner	

## ***Introduction to Adding Natural Decor to an Aquarium***

<http://www.aquariumadvice.com/introduction-adding-decor-aquarium>

So you've finally decided to switch to a more natural looking décor or maybe just adding to your existing aquascape. Here is an article that will help you through the process of preparing "natural" things for your tank. Whether it be sand, driftwood, or rocks it all has to be prepared before being introduced to the aquascape.

First off let's start with sand.

Adding sand to an aquarium can make the tank more natural looking. In the natural environment of a fish, reptile, and/or invertebrates there is not brightly colored gravel to appease the inhabitants. Although the bright colors may please the tank owner it is believed that the inhabitants of an aquarium will be much happier in a space that looks more like home.

Let's look at the different types of sand

### **Natural Play Sand**

Natural play sand is a very common sand used in aquascapes, it is an affordable way to have the natural look without breaking the bank. Natural play sand contains clay and needs to be rinsed very thoroughly.

### **Sand Used for Blasting/ Silica Sand**

Commonly sold at hardware supply stores, it is another common sand used in tanks because of the affordability. This sand contains Iron Slag and is not always recommended for "diggers" as it can contain sharp edges. This sand may alter the chemistry in the tank so it's best to keep a close eye on the levels.

### **Coral**

Coral is a lighter rough sand used for tanks to stabilize the PH and keep the water alkaline. It also can improve the buffer capacity.

### **Aragonite**

Aragonite can be an expensive sand but it can come in many different colors and grain size which makes it popular in today's aquariums. This sand can keep the water alkaline just as coral does.

### **Tahitian Moon Sand**

This is a black sand that can be expensive as well but looks very beautiful in an aquarium and can bring out the colors of the fish.

### **Pool Filter Sand**

Pool filter sand is another cheaper alternative to capturing that natural look; pool filter sand is also white sand. It is sold at stores where pool supplies are available.

### **Preparing Sand for an Aquarium**

There are a few different ways that people use to ready the sand for use in an aquarium but it seems like the most popular way is to take these steps:

Get a five gallon bucket and a garden hose. Fill the bucket about halfway full (about 2 gallons) and fill the bucket full with water.

Once full, dump out as much of the “dirt film” out of the bucket then fill it back up again. Churn the sand to release excess dirt, dust, etc. and pour the water again.

Repeat the process until the water runs clear and do this with the remaining sand. Sands such as play sand have elements of clay in the sand so take care in making sure all of the excess dirt is cleaned off. There are no cutting corners when it comes to rinsing sand.

After all of that you are ready to put the sand in the aquarium. You can either remove all of the fish in the aquarium at the time of the switch or leave the fish. Whichever you decide always make sure to shut down any filters in the tank as there will be a lot of particles floating that can damage a filter.

Place a little at a time in the aquarium to try and prevent sand from overly clouding the tank.

Once the gravel is out and the sand is in wait for at least an hour till the sand settles before turning on any filters.

Cloudiness and floating particles are normal for the first day after the switch; keep an eye on your water levels afterwards as well to make sure the tank doesn't go into a mini cycle.

## **Driftwood**

Driftwood is one of the easiest ways to capture that “natural” look. It can be bought from stores or even found in streams/creeks. Be aware that in some areas it can be illegal to take wood from certain bodies of water. That wood may provide a use to the area such as a dwelling for inhabitants. Always check any laws or regulations before harvesting things from the outdoors. It is also not recommended to use driftwood from bodies of water that may contain salt because it can cause the salinity levels to rise in the tank causing harm to fish that may not be tolerant of salt.

Driftwood can come in many shapes and sizes but there are a few types of wood that are not recommended for aquarium use. Woods such as:

### **Red Cedar, Pine, Fir, Soft woods**

### **Any type of wood containing sap**

### **Any wood that may contain varnish**

### **Bamboo- This is not a wood, it is a grass and there are reports of fish being poisoned by fresh cut bamboo.**

This can release toxins in the tank which can in turn harm the inhabitants.

Types of driftwood that are considered to be safe for aquarium use are:

### **Bogwood, Mopane (type of bogwood), Teak, Mangrove Roots, Manzanita, Hickory, Oak, Cypress East**

### **Grapevine -although this is on the safe list it is recommended that the plant needs to be dried and weathered for a year after the initial cut**

Preparing driftwood can be done a few different ways. Wood can be boiled, soaked, and baked. For smaller pieces it is best to boil the wood for a few hours, some even boil it up to eight hours.

Take the driftwood and clean it as best as possible, this can be accomplished by scrubbing, hosing it down, or even power washing the wood. It is best to try and get off any soft pieces that might lead to rotting later on in the tank. After the washing is completed, you will need to determine the method of preparation by judging the size and shape of the wood. If it is small enough it is best to boil the wood in a large pot for a few hours each day. Depending on the type of wood it is will determine the amount of time needed for boiling. Use your best judgment on this, when the water appears to have a more “tea” like appearance other than a dark brown it’s close to being ready. You can either stick the wood in the tank now or wait until it sinks. For larger pieces, place the wood in a large container (In my opinion a storage tub works best for this) and completely cover the wood with hot water. Each day, tannins will begin to leech from the wood making the water brown. Dump the water each day and replace with clean hot water, repeat this process until the water is no longer a brownish color and runs clear.

There is a way to prep and sterilize the wood in the dishwasher but be aware that allot of newer models have an automatic rinsing agent to could cause chemicals being soaked into the wood with an ending result of it leeching toxins into the tank.

Making a piece sink can be a process in itself. Some pieces may take days, weeks, or even months for the wood to become completely waterlogged and sink. If you have a piece that is being completely stubborn and won't stay under, screw the wood to a piece of slate and bury the slate under the substrate so it is not visible.

### **Rocks**

There are many species of fish/reptiles that have a rocky habitat and also this habitat may serve a purpose such as breeding and dwellings. Not all rocks can go in certain tanks however; rocks such as limestone could alter the chemistry in the tank. Here is a list of rocks that could be considered safe for aquarium use:

**Granite:** Safe but may be heavy

**Slate, Quartz, Onyx**

**Lava Rock:** Contains chelated iron which is used to fertilize plants. Do **NOT** boil this rock as it can contain air pockets which could result in the stone exploding.

**Petrified Wood:** Use acid test before introducing into the aquarium

Rocks to avoid:

**Limestone:** Unless you are wanting to raise the GH of your water

**Sandstone:** can contain possible metals

The next seven stones should be avoided due to the fact that it can contain Manganese and unchelated iron

**Amethyst, Geodes, Gypsum, Ironstone, Nephrite, Marble, Jasper**



### Preparing the Stone

Before you just take a stone and throw it into the tank it should be tested to determine if the rock will alter the chemistry in the tank. The vinegar test is the best way to determine this.

Pour vinegar over the rock and watch closely to see if it starts to bubble. If so it might not be best to use this rock for the aquarium unless you want the chemistry to be altered.

Rocks such as limestone can contain  $\text{CaCO}_3$  which can cause the PH in the water to rise.  $\text{CaCO}_3$  is an alkali compound which acts as a neutralizer to the acid (vinegar), when an acid is poured on the rock the calcium carbonate neutralizes the acid therefore making it bubble.

Without fully knowing what type of rock it is, boiling can be a risky process. So let's just look at a safer way to clean the rock.

Scrub the rock clean with hot water (no soaps) I always keep a clean toothbrush around just in case, the toothbrushes bristles are perfect to use to get in the little cracks of the rock. After the rock is clean, place it in a tub/bucket and pour boiling water over the rock and let it sit for about an hour to make sure all of the excess bacteria die off.

After all of that, place the rock in the tank and enjoy!





