



CARE INFO

Praying Mantis



Getting Started

- Hatching your praying mantises is easy!
- Open up the habitat and lay egg cases on the bottom. Make sure the habitat is zipped tight.
- In warm temperatures (70° to 90° F), nymphs (young mantises) will wiggle out of their cases in two to eight weeks.
- Spray egg case lightly with tepid water every other day. A plant sprayer with a fine mister works well for this. Don't let your egg case get too wet. Make sure that it isn't sitting in a puddle.
- Dozens of tiny nymphs will emerge within a few hours. For the first hour or two, while their soft exoskeletons harden, they are not active.
- If your nymphs don't emerge after eight weeks, put the egg cases in the refrigerator overnight. Then return them to the habitat and allow them another three weeks.
- *Optional:* Place a large twig in your habitat, leaning it against the side. Use a needle to insert thread through one side of an egg case and tie the case to the twig. Repeat with the second case. When nymphs emerge, they will suspend themselves from the cases on silken strands and descend to the ground. This is fun to watch and worth the extra trouble.

We Recommend

- Using a clean, plastic or metal spray bottle, spritz your mesh house twice daily with water. The moisture creates an environment similar to spring rains for the ootheca. Keep spraying your mesh house even after the praying mantis have hatched. Each spritz provides drinking water to your new nymphs.
- Line the bottom of your mesh house with paper towels. They absorb any excess water from daily misting and also provide a bright, white background for viewing newly hatched nymphs.

Caring for Fruit Flies

- You will need lots of fruit flies to feed the hungry nymphs.
- You have received two large tubes, one filled with fruit flies (wingless), the other filled with food.
- Keep flies in the first container for a full week.

Caring for Fruit Flies *continued*

- At the end of the week, transfer them to a habitat: (1) remove stopper from food container, put in a tablespoon of water (enough to make a paste) and place on its side in the habitat; (2) place the vial of fruit flies on its side in the habitat. Remove stopper; (3) quickly zip the habitat closed.
- The fruit fly food will last four weeks. When it runs out, place a slice of apple or banana in the habitat. Replace fruit whenever it dries out.
- If you are concerned that all the flies have died, you probably have eggs that will hatch more (fruit flies have approx. a 48-hour life span). You can also put fruit slices outside to attract more, then put them in the habitat.

Caring for Nymphs

- Within hours after they emerge from the egg case, nymphs will begin eating fruit flies.
- Place a bottle cap full of water in the habitat. Refill frequently.
- Watch carefully. When nymphs run out of flies—or even when they don't—they will eat each other! This is one way that praying mantises are adapted to their environments. A few survive to reproduce.
- If you let nature take its course, you will soon have about a dozen large, well-fed nymphs in your habitat.
- Now is the time to release these healthy nymphs or begin collecting more insects to feed them.

Release

- To release, take the habitat outdoors, unzip it, and gently shake the nymphs onto leafy plants.
- Many gardeners and organic farmers use praying mantises for natural pest control because mantises eat insects that harm plants and crops.
- *Optional:* Keep several nymphs for two or three weeks. Try to reserve some flies for them. As nymphs grow, they will need larger amounts of food. Buy crickets at a pet store or catch insects that you find; moths, flies, ants, beetles, crickets and grasshoppers make good mantis food.
- Mantises respond to the movement of live prey. Dead insects will not attract them.