

Gorgonians (Sea Fans and Sea Rods)

Class Anthozoa, Subclass Octocorallia, Order Gorgonacea



top two photos by Doni Marie
 bottom photo by Gene Schwartz

Common names: sea fans, sea rods

Natural origin: Indo-Pacific

Sensitivity (Level 3 to 5): Adaptability depends greatly on genera and species. Some (mostly the zooxanthellate species) can adapt to captive life with diligent, experienced care. Others (such the azooxanthellate species) will not survive even under the care of the most experienced aquarists.

Feeding: Azooxanthellate sea fans can be very difficult to feed. They need large amounts of small particle food. That said, success is thought possible when keeping them in healthy, exceptionally well fed tanks. The zooxanthellate species are easier to feed but still need variety of small particle food.

Lighting (Level 0, 3, or 7): Little or no light is needed for the azooxanthellate species. Dim lighting is needed for *Subergorgia spp.*, *Diodogorgia nudulifera*, *Swiftia exserta* and *Leptogorgia miniate* from the Caribbean. More intense lighting is needed for zooxanthellate corals, *Erythropodium spp.* (encrusting gorgonians), *Eunicea spp.*, *Muricea spp.*, *Pseudotergorgia spp.*, and *Plexaura flexuosa*.

Water flow: Strong water flow is needed for feeding and to keep the coral free of algal growth. Ideally, the flow should be perpendicular to the plane of the coral, reversing (alternating) and laminar (as opposed to turbulent, swirling flow).

Placement: Place these corals a safe distance from aggressive corals and fast growing soft corals that might overgrow them. Note that some gorgonians can grow quite large (up to a meter in height).

General: The azooxanthellate members of these corals are difficult to keep and certainly not recommended for beginners. Typically, the red or orange, and many yellow colored gorgonians (with white or clear polyps) are azooxanthellate and should be avoided. Some species (the zooxanthellate species) are not quite as difficult to keep. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to identify a species, much less know if that species is one that might do well in an aquarium or not.