

OVERVIEW						
<p>A number of species of tropical centipede are found in the pet trade and marketed as “giant centipedes”. The taxonomy of most of these is uncertain and when identified by scientific name a giant centipede is usually referred to as <i>Scolopendra subspinipes spp.</i>, meaning an unidentified subspecies of <i>S. subspinipes</i>. Popular varieties have common names based on geography and color such as “Vietnamese”, “Malaysian Cherry Red” and “Haitian”. Imports of all these varieties are typically 5-7 inches in length, but exceptional specimens may reach 9 inches or more. The true giants of the South American species <i>Scolopendra gigantea</i> may exceed a foot.</p> <p>Tropical centipedes are inhabitants of the forest floor and jungle leaf litter conditions in the terrarium provide appropriate conditions. They are carnivores that will eat anything they can catch including other centipedes and must be housed alone. Although not dangerous to healthy humans, centipedes are venomous and can deliver an extremely painful bite. Centipedes are fast and active terrarium pets that are fascinating to observe, not to interact with!</p>						
ENVIRONMENT						
Conditions »	Day Temp	78-85°F	Night Temp	70-78°F	Humidity	70-80%
Heat Source »	Undertank heat mats or low wattage terrarium bulbs providing red or blue “nocturnal” light may be used. Any heat should be provided in manner that creates a gradient from the warmer to cooler end to the enclosure, and should be thermostat-controlled to ensure excessive heat is avoided.					
HOUSING		<p>An extremely secure enclosure that maintains humidity is required. Small plastic terrariums (e.g., Kritter Keepers) or small aquariums with a tight-fitting locking lid may be used. A 5 ½ to 10 gallon aquarium is favored by most keepers. For enclosures with a great deal of ventilation (such as plastic terrariums) some of the vents may need to be covered to maintain adequate humidity. The substrate should provide moisture and one end of the cage should be damper than the other. Several inches of damp coconut coir, peat moss or unfertilized soil covered with a layer of orchid or sheet moss and scattered dry leaves (oak, magnolia) works well. Scatter a couple of pieces of cork bark or flat rocks throughout the cage. A water dish is unnecessary and would just be filled in with soil during the centipede’s activity. Lightly mist the enclosure with lukewarm purified water every day or two in the evening and feed well and the centipede will receive sufficient moisture.</p>				
DIET		<p>A variety of insects will be eagerly accepted, including crickets, roaches and kingworms (superworms). Feed small meals (adult cricket) every other day or a larger meal (adult roach) once a week. Small rodents or other vertebrates will also be accepted, but their use is best avoided as it is unnecessarily gruesome and uneaten remains are stinky and messy and will attract pest flies and mold.</p>				
KEEPER SAFETY						
<p>Large centipedes can deliver an extremely painful and potentially serious bite. Some keepers service cages or even handle using leather welder gloves, but I find it easiest to avoid contact (normal care requires no interaction!), and when moving a “pede” becomes necessary, I either chase it into a jar using a tool like a wooden spoon or <i>gently</i> lift it using rubber-tipped forceps. The latter requires experience to perform safely for both you and the pede.</p>						