



PET PLANET
COMMUNITY



CARE
GUIDE

THREE-TOED BOX TURTLE

Care Guide THREE-TOED BOX TURTLE



PET PLANET
COMMUNITY

EXPERIENCE LEVEL



Level 3: Intermediate

Only three toes on
each back foot!

ORIGIN

Native to southern
U.S. (from Texas to
Oklahoma & parts of
Michigan)



BIOME: Temperate Forest

Forests & Grasslands

SPECIES FEATURES

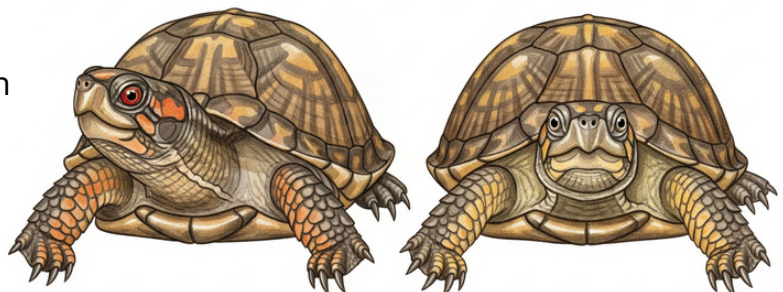
Male: Red eyes, curved plastron

Female: Brown eyes, flat plastron

Adult Size: 4–6 in

Weight: 0.5–1.5 lbs

Lifespan: 30–50+ yrs





DIET

0-2
yrs

Young Box Turtles consume more protein, specially insects.

2+
yrs

The older the Box Turtle gets the more consumption of herbivore diet.



Always offer a varied diet of protein and greens.

Feed: worms, snails, berries, mushrooms, leafy greens.

Fruit: Rare treat only (too much sugar!)



Diet Caution: Some foods can block calcium or be toxic.

✗ No dairy, avocado, onions, bread, garlic and others.

✗ No wild bugs (pesticides!)

✗ No iceberg lettuce (low nutritional value)



Young box turtles should eat daily, while adults can be fed every 2-3 days.

HYDRATION



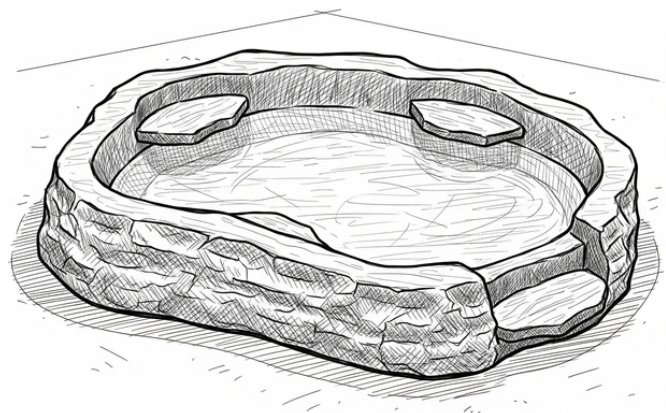
Daily clean fresh water.



Box Turtles soak daily. Helps their shell health. 5 - 15 min/day.



Water Dish: Shallow and Easy to climb out.





IDEAL CONDITIONS



Day temp: 75–90°F



Night: 65–75°F



Basking: 90–95°F



Humidity: 60–80%

ENCLOSURE

*Need plenty of space
They walk to digest.*

Outdoors, 100+ sq ft



- 1** Shallow dish of water
- 2** Hides, shade, plants
- 3** Logs, leaves, natural features
deep soil for burrowing
- 4** High wood or block walls;
use wire only as a top lid
for predators.

⚠ Caution:

✗ No wire fencing

✗ No flood zones

Corners must be turtle-proof (they climb!)
Protect from predators





ENCLOSURE

*Need plenty of space
They walk to digest.*

Indoor: Only temporary

- 1** Shallow dish of water
- 2** Hides, shade, plants
- 3** Logs, leaves, natural features
deep soil for burrowing
- 4** Tropical soil deep enough to
burrow; leaves and natural
materials preferred.
- 5** Must have: UVB (tropical)
⚠️ Keep above eye level to
prevent blindness.
- 6** Thermometer + hygrometer
- 7** Heat lamp (tropical) on one side only
⚠️ Avoid infrared—it harms vision. Use
heat pads on one side with caution.
- 8** Cooler side for temperature range.



Day temp: 75–90°F



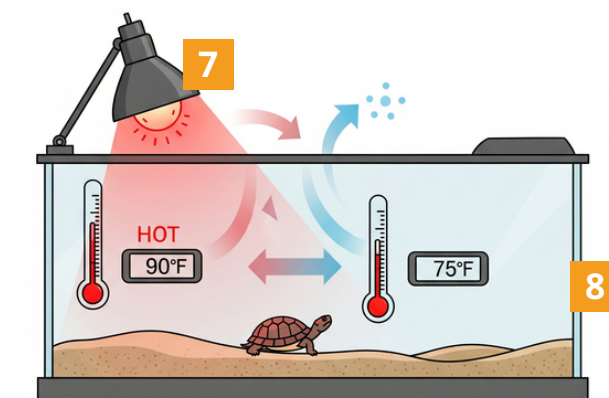
Night: 65–75°F



Basking: 90–95°F



Humidity: 60–80%





ENRICHMENT & BEHAVIOR

- Love to walk & explore to digest
- Enjoy logs, plants, water spots
- Remember favorite areas
- Small changes = good
- Big changes = stressful
- Shell has feeling — gentle pets ok!
- Recognize caregivers, respond to names
- Don't pick up often — it stresses them



BURROWING TIME

- Begins: late fall (Oct–Mar)
- Behavior: less eating, more hiding, digging
- Safe if temps stay above 55°F to 60°F
- Indoors: allow cool area to dig if outdoor is too cold.
- Never put in fridge!





HEALTH & SAFETY CHECK

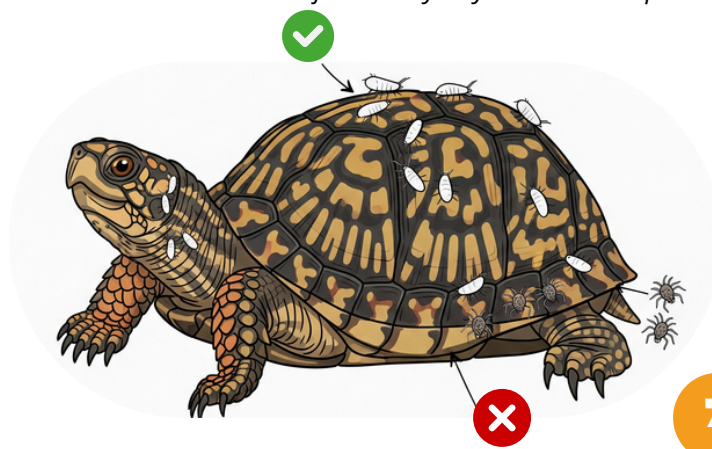
-  **Eyes:** Clear and open? Look for any swelling, cloudiness, or watery eyes—this can mean your turtle is sick.
-  **Nose:** Dry and normal? Watch for mucus, bubbles, or runny nose, which can be signs of a respiratory infection.
-  **Tail:** Normal shape? Check that it's not swollen, bent, or broken — problems here can show illness.
-  **Shell:** Strong and smooth? No cracks, dents, or soft spots. Soft or cracked shells may mean your turtle needs more calcium or better care.
-  **Belly (bottom shell):** Look for dents or bumps, which can happen if your turtle is eating too much or too little.



-  **Activity:** Is your turtle moving around and exploring? If it hides all day, it might be sick or too cold/hot.
-  **Basking:** All day? not at all? Too much or too little sun can cause problems.
-  **Friends:** Do you have only one turtle? Box turtles like to be alone —they can bully each other if kept too close.

-  **Water:** Is the water clean and fresh? Dirty water can make your turtle sick.
-  **Enclosure:** Keep some spots dry and clean. Remove waste and old food every day or two to keep your turtle healthy.
-  **Bugs:** Tiny white bugs (springtails) are good—they help keep the enclosure clean.

Dark crawling bugs (mites) are bad and need to be removed.

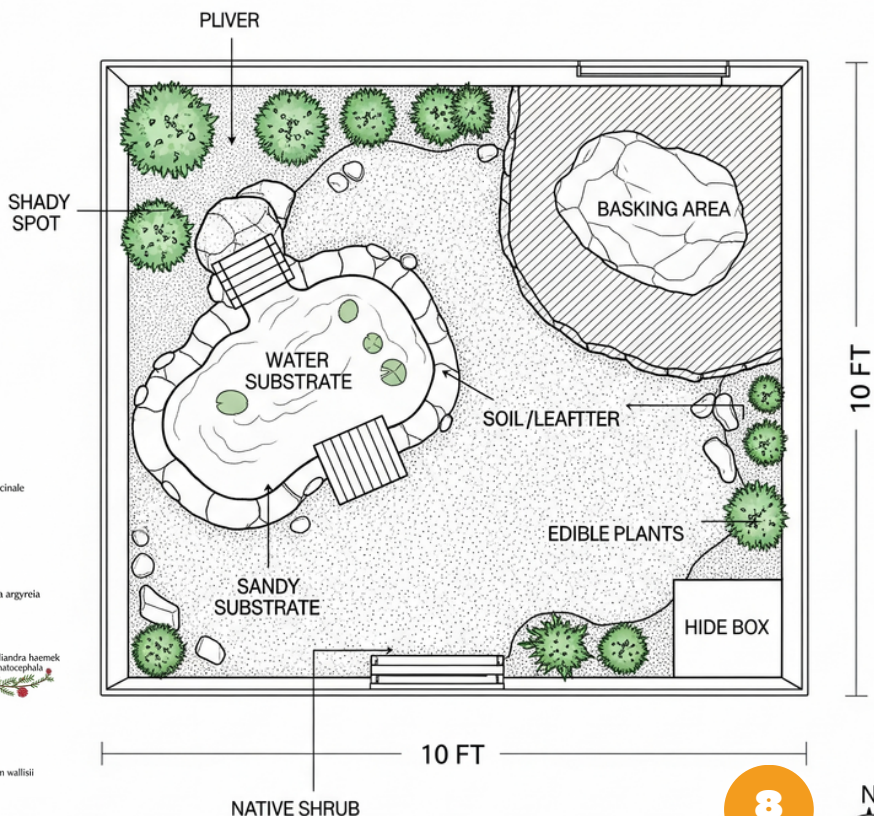
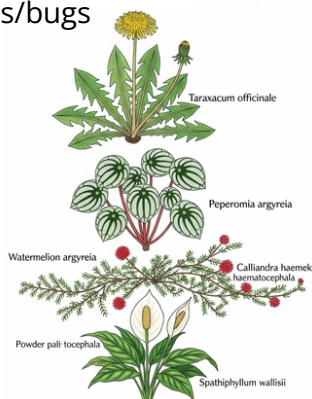




ADOPT PET CHECK LIST



- **Enclosure**
 - 10x10 ft or bigger
 - Water area (¼ space) (pond or dish)
 - Dry & shady spots
- **Materials**
 - Tropical soil mix (*cypress + coconut*)
 - Sand & gravel (*opt*)
 - Rocks, logs, leaves
- **Plants** (Safe for turtles)
- **Predator Protection**
 - Wire lid (chicken wire)
 - Secure fencing, bury edges
- **Temperature & Humidity**
 - Thermometer (75–85°F)
 - Humidity gauge (60–80%)
- **Lighting**
 - Basking spot
 - Indoor: UVB light & Heat
- **Food & Supplements**
 - Calcium powder
 - Veggies, occasional fruit
 - Worms/snails/bugs





SURRENDERING YOUR PET

If You Can't Keep Your Turtle:

- ✗ Never release into the wild. They may not survive. Can harm native wildlife
- ✓ Contact a rescue (like Central Texas Tortoise Rescue)
They'll help or connect you.

Surrendering is safe, free, and kind.

ADOPT A PET

Rescue First: Start with local turtle rescues or wildlife rehab centers — they often have turtles of all ages, both male and female, looking for homes.

Responsible Breeders: Only if no rescue is available. Ask for proof the turtle was bred in captivity.

Check Legitimacy: Visit in person. Turtle looks healthy Clean, enclosures. Care questions answered clearly.
No Wild-Caught.

No Breeding: Never house males and females together — breeding without a plan is irresponsible and harmful to turtles.

FUN FACTS!

Turtle shells have nerve endings — they can feel pets!
Never paint the shell! They need sunlight & air for shell health.



Central Texas
Tortoise Rescue

