



Genera: Very many different genera.

Family: Characidae

Geographic Origin: South America, Africa.

Common Names: Piranha, Pacu, Penguin Fish, Headstanders etc.

Compatibility: Many of the characins cannot be kept with other species (Piscivores). Others present no problems. Always thoroughly research the fish you intend to buy or you may find that the other inhabitants of the tank are no longer present!

Minimum Aquarium Size: The smaller species can be kept in a 600mm x 300mm x 300mm (24" x 12" x 12") aquarium. Other species such as the Pacu can grow very large and require a tank of at least 1800mm X 600mm x 600mm (72" x 24" x 24") to accommodate properly.

Temperature: Most fish are happy with temperatures between 20°-28° C (70° - 82° F).

Habitat: Some Characins are also herbivores so a planted tank will be rapidly stripped bare. Habitat requirements should form part of your prior research.

Water: Generally these fish come from soft, acid waters. However it is not generally a problem to change them over to hard alkaline water. This is usually accomplished in the shop prior to purchase.

Health: Apart from White Spot, they do not have any particular problems provided the aquarium water is kept clean and clear. They benefit from a water change of approx 25% weekly.

Diet: The piscivores can usually be persuaded to accept beef heart, prawns or strips of fish. The feeding of live fish is not acceptable. Others readily consume Lettuce, Spinach etc. Others will eat all forms of dried, frozen or live food such as *Daphnia*.

Plants: See **Habitat**, above. Those fish that are not herbivores will enjoy a well-planted aquarium.

Availability: Many Characins are readily available. Remember to check - prior to purchase - eating habits and eventual adult size! Inspect carefully for signs of disease. Reject fish that are lethargic, damaged or hollow-bellied.

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