INSIDE FLAP • KEEPER HABITS

## 4 Keys to Long-Term Health

**Small Daily Habits That Prevent 95% of Vet Visits**

### Dry Bedding = Healthy Skin

Even though wild garters swim in creeks, they bask on dry banks! Wet, swampy cage bedding gives them bacterial scale rot fast. Keep the bedding dry and let them swim in their big water bowl.

### Dinner on a Little Plate!

Put a flat jar lid or plastic dish in the tank as their 'dinner plate' — they'll come running out as soon as they see you open the door!

### Baby Musk Passes Fast

Nervous babies rarely bite, but they love to wiggle and smear smelly musk on your hands! Handle gently over a towel for 5–10 minutes twice a week and they stop musking once they trust you.

### Fun 'Fishing' Days

Dropping a few tilapia strips or safe live guppies into their clean water bowl lets them dive and 'fish' just like in the wild!

**Why NEVER Feed Goldfish or Rosy Red Minnows?** Feeder goldfish and rosy red minnows are packed with an enzyme called **thiaminase** that destroys Vitamin B1 in snakes, causing fatal neurological seizures! Stick strictly to **grocery store tilapia/salmon strips, live guppies/platies, Canadian nightcrawlers, and pinky/fuzzy mice**!



BACK COVER • TAKE THIS TO THE AISLE

## Grab-and-Go Setup Checklist

### TANK & DRY BEDDING

- [ ] 20-Gal Long or 40-Gal Breeder Terrarium + Screen Clips
- [ ] Shredded Aspen Snake Bedding OR Dry-Top Cypress / Reptile Soil
- [ ] Climbing Branches, Cork Bark & Shady Leaf Vines

### DAYTIME BASKING & UVB

- [ ] 50W–75W Basking Bulb + Ceramic Dome on Thermostat
- [ ] Low-Output 5%–7% Shade Linear UVB Bar
- [ ] Digital Thermometer & Hygrometer Gauge

### HIDES, SWIM BOWL & FOOD

- [ ] 2 Snug Caves + Enclosed Humid Moss Shed Box
- [ ] Large Heavy Water Bowl + Reptile Water Dechlorinator
- [ ] Frozen Pinky/Fuzzy Mice + Nightcrawlers + Calcium w/ D3
- [ ] Feeding Tongs & Small Flat Dinner Dish

### MY GARTER SNAKE'S INFO & FEEDING LOG

Name / Morph: _____

Gotcha Date & Weight: _____

Current Feeder Size & Day: _____

**Critter Cabana & Cascade Pet Supply**

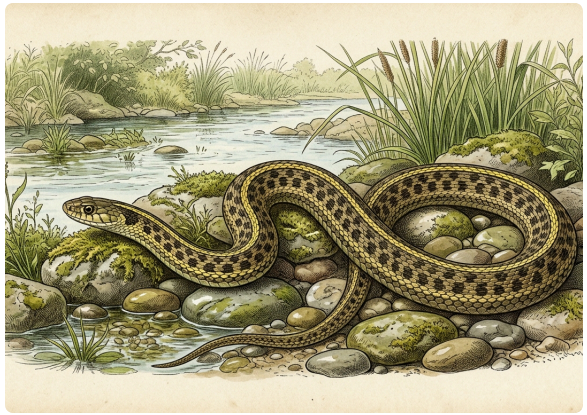
Questions about heating, shedding, or a picky eater? Stop by or call our reptile team anytime — we're here for the full 10–15+ year commitment!



CRITTER CABANA & CASCADE PET SUPPLY • CARE GUIDE

# Checkered Garter Snake

*Thamnophis marcianus*



**The Quick Version:** Unlike nocturnal snakes that hide in a cave all day, Checkered Garter Snakes are awake during the day, super curious, and actually come out to watch you walk across the room! Even better, you can train them to eat chopped worms, fish strips, and pinky mice right off a little dinner plate!

### QUICK VITAL STATS AT-A-GLANCE

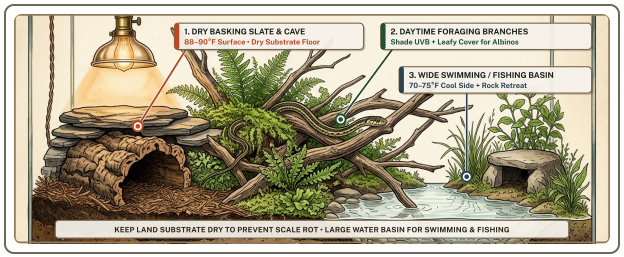
| | |
|---|---|
| LIFESPAN<br>**10–15+ Years** | ADULT SIZE<br>**18–32 Inches** |
| ACTIVE HOURS<br>**Daytime (Diurnal)** | ADULT TANK<br>**20L to 40-Gal** |
| DIET<br>**Mice, Worms & Safe Fish** | |

OPEN FOR TANK SETUP, TEMPS, FEEDING & SHOPPING LIST →

STEP 1 • HABITAT & CLIMATE

# Dry Land Floor + Big Swimming Bowl Setup

**Big Rule: Keep Their Bedding Dry & Give Them a Big Water Bowl to Swim In!**




| | |
|---|---|
| **Warm Basking Perch**<br>Flat rock or branch under the basking lamp | **88°–90°F** |
| **Warm Side Air Temp**<br>Active daytime hunting & exploring zone | **80°–85°F** |
| **Keep Bedding Dry!**<br>Wet bedding causes scale blisters — keep air 40–55% RH | **Dry Floor!** |
| **Cool Side & Swim Bowl**<br>Cool end with a wide dechlorinated water basin | **70°–75°F** |
| **Nighttime Temp Drop**<br>Lights off at night | **65°–72°F** |

**Thermostat & Gauge Rule:** Stick-on dial gauges can be off by 10°F+! Use a digital probe thermometer/hygrometer and always plug heating mats and heat emitters into a **digital thermostat**.



STEP 2 • STOCKED STORE OPTIONS

# Two Ways That Work

**Pick Option A or Option B Based on Your Home Setup**

## What to Feed: Rotational Menu vs. Mouse-Heavy

Garter snakes have super fast daytime metabolisms and love variety:

**OPTION A: THAWED PINKY/FUZZY MICE + NIGHTCRAWLERS + SAFE FISH**

Rotating whole pinky/fuzzy mice (which have natural bone calcium!), chopped earthworms, and tilapia strips is the gold standard.

**OPTION B: WORM & FISH STRIP MIX (FOR TINY BABIES)**

If a baby is eating mostly chopped worms and fish fillets without mouse bones, dust their food 1–2× a week with Calcium + D3 powder!

## Daytime Basking & Shade Lighting

Because Garter Snakes are active daytime hunters, overhead light makes them thrive:

**OPTION A: 50W HALOGEN BASKING BULB + 5%–6% SHADE UVB**

Makes their checkerboard pattern glow while helping them synthesize natural Vitamin D3.

**OPTION B: OVERHEAD BASKING LAMP + DAPPLED LEAFY VINES**

If you pick a red-eyed Albino morph, drape leafy vines under the lamp so they can bask comfortably in dappled shade.

## Solo vs. Same-Sex Buddy Tank

Garter snakes are one of the only social snakes — with one huge dinner-time catch:

**OPTION A: KEPT SOLO (ZERO DINNER DRAMA!)**

Easiest way to make sure your snake gets 100% of its meal.

**OPTION B: SAME-SEX PAIR IN A ROOMY 40-GAL TANK**

If you keep two same-sized garters together, **always feed them separately or on opposite ends with tongs** — if two garters grab opposite ends of the same worm, one snake can accidentally swallow the other!



STEP 3 • DIET & NUTRITION

# Feeding Schedule & The Huge 'Goldfish Warning'

**Fast Eaters & Fast Poopers: Feed Babies Every 3–4 Days • Adults Every 5–7 Days**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Babies**<br>Every 3–4 Days | **Chopped Pinky Mice, Earthworm Pieces & Tilapia Strips:** Chop into bite-sized pieces on a plastic lid or offer from tongs; dust worm/fish meals with Calcium. |
| **Sub-Adults**<br>Every 4–5 Days | **Whole Pinky/Fuzzy Mice + Nightcrawlers:** Once they can swallow whole pinkies/fuzzies, mouse bones give them great natural calcium. |
| **Adults**<br>Every 5–7 Days | **Fuzzy/Hopper Mice, Nightcrawlers & Safe Fish Strips:** Keep portions moderate so they stay sleek and active. |

**READ THIS BEFORE BUYING FISH — Safe vs. Toxic:**

- **SAFE FISH (No Thiaminase!):** Tilapia fillets, Salmon, Trout, Cod, Live Guppies/Platies
- **Staple Whole Foods:** Thawed Pinky/Fuzzy Mice & Canadian Nightcrawlers
- **BIG NO-NO: Goldfish & Minnows!:** Feeder Goldfish & Rosy Reds cause fatal seizures!
- **Skip Red Wiggler Compost Worms:** Compost red wigglers ooze foul yellow toxin — use Nightcrawlers!

**First-Week Rule:** Give your new Checkered Garter Snake **5 to 7 days of peace and quiet** in its new tank before handling or offering its very first meal so it can map out its hides and feel safe!