

ADJUSTING THE HARDNESS OF CANBERRA WATER
TO SUIT SOME NATIVE RAINBOW FISHES

by Joe Schill

In his book "Illustrated Dictionary of tropical Fishes", Mr Hans Frey writes (or rather, wrote, for he died last year) that Rainbow Fishes of the genus Melanotaenia are generally hardy and easy to keep but that some of them, notably the Australian M. nigrans, are very sensitive to new water. Maybe some of our members have had similar problems in keeping other species in the local water.

Many species of Melanotaenia need a water hardness of DH 10° or so, but our Canberra supply is usually only about DH 4°. Thus, you need to raise the hardness artificially.

To do this, first prepare a concentrate as follows: fill a plastic bucket or equivalent glass container with clear water and add about one tablespoon-full of Plaster of Paris, with vigorous stirring to avoid the formation of lumps. When a uniform slurry has been obtained, leave the mixture to stand for several days. The excess Plaster of Paris will settle to the bottom and the clear solution may be siphoned or carefully decanted off. Now you can add small amounts of this concentrate to your tank, being careful to monitor the increase in DH with a hardness testing kit, until the required value has been attained.

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