

***Cichlasoma Tetracanthus* - The Cuban Cichlid**

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My interest in this species began in the middle of 1991 when I purchased two very vivid blue and white individuals to brighten a 500 litre community tank. These juveniles settled in with other assorted cichlids almost immediately and set about investigating all the hiding places among the rocks and driftwood.

This species has a dislike for water-changes, temperature variations and nitrates. A pH of between 7.0 - 7.8 did not seem to disturb them but as a result of learning these facts the hard way I added two more pieces of fertiliser to the garden.

The striking colour of the 'Cuban' had impressed me and I began to search the Aquariums and Wholesalers with the view of buying mature stock for breeding. It took about two weeks to find two males in Sydney, two weeks later I acquired a pair in Canberra and after a further three weeks I purchased another male and three females from the country areas of New South Wales.

A male and female were placed in a Breeding tank and 24 hours later I found one of them floating. When *C. tetracanthus* have been fighting or in a community tank both sexes adopt identical colouring; further frustrating attempts to find pairs. I selected another two fish for the breeding tank and transferred the remaining stock into another tank with other small cichlids. The later transfer of stock was as an attempt to allow the fish to sort themselves into pairs (the natural way), and it worked because a month later a single pair had become constant companions.

This pair were the next to try the breeding tank! Success at last with a brood of eggs seven days later. Hatching occurred four days later with the fry resembling 'black wrigglers' and after another the fry were free-swimming. The fry grew well attaining a length of 8mm after a month and after two months a length of 12mm.

The cost of this exercise was not cheap with 8 mature fish costing between \$20 and \$50 each. I lost two in the breeding tank and three in the community tank. A naturally selected pair was hard to find but the achievement of breeding this species was worth the effort.