

Eastern Box Turtle



Fast Facts

- Fairly playful and social
- Live 40-50 years on average
- On average grow to 5-7 inches long
- Prefer minimal handling
- Known for their distinct high-domed shells
- Populations are declining in the wild



Playful, High-Domed Turtles

Eastern box turtles are awesome turtles with a distinctive high-domed shell. As pets, they are fairly social and can show signs of recognizing their favorite humans. They can also be quite playful and will enjoy a good toy. The biggest factor when considering one as a pet is their great lifespan. In captivity, they average between 40 to 50 years with good care. Ensure you're prepared to provide a forever home through life's changes and you'll have a wonderful companion for many years.

Native Habitat

Eastern box turtles are native to the eastern United States. They inhabit a variety of environments from damp forests to dry grassy fields. They are active during the day and often seen foraging for food. Unfortunately, their populations are declining in the wild due to a combined result of environmental factors.



Recommended Housing And Accessories

Most aquariums are too small for eastern box turtles, but a tank of at least 20 gallons works well for hatchlings and juveniles, such as the [Zilla QuickBuild Terrarium](#). If you plan to keep your turtle indoors, an enclosure of at least 4 square feet with sides at least 18 inches tall is sufficient. Outdoor pens can also be a great option in temperate climates but require careful planning and predator protection. Make sure your outdoor pen has sunny and shaded areas.

Your turtle should always have easy access to two shallow pans of water, both indoors and outdoors, for soaking and drinking.

Provide hiding spots and loose litter for burrowing. Maintain cleanliness with daily water refreshing and weekly litter cleaning. Provide substrate like mulch, pellets, or moss to mirror their natural environment, such as [Zilla Coconut Husk Brick](#) or [Zilla Jungle Mix](#). Ensure it's deep enough for burrowing and remains moist.



Temperature And Lighting

Eastern box turtles prefer basking temperatures around 85-88°F with a shaded area between 74-80°F. This temperature gradient can be created with [Zilla Incandescent Spot Bulbs](#) or [Zilla Mini Halogen Bulbs](#). Nighttime temperatures should not drop below 70°F, so use a heat emitter like the [Zilla Heat Projector](#) to keep your turtle warm without disturbing their sleep.

UVA and UVB is a necessity for a healthy turtle. Indoor turtles require UVB lighting and supplemental heat lights for 10-12 hours a day. Make sure to provide access to UVA/UVB on basking platforms using any [Zilla Fluorescent UVA/UVB bulb](#). Make sure to replace bulbs every 6 months.

For more information on UV lighting, read [Understanding UVA, UVB, and UVC Reptile Lighting](#).



Feeding And Diet

An adult box turtle may eat every other day, while younger box turtles should eat daily, and hatchlings twice a day. Provide your eastern box turtle a varied diet including vegetables, fruits, hay, and insects. [Zilla River Shrimp](#) and [Zilla Turtle Sticks](#) are all nutritious options they will love. Small animal hay like [Kaytee Alfalfa Mini Bales](#) can be a great and convenient source of fiber.

Check the [Zilla Feeding Guide](#) for a list of appropriate food options.



Handling

Eastern box turtles prefer minimal handling but can benefit from regular interaction with their owner. They will recognize their favorite humans and enjoy playtime, but simultaneously can be stressed when handled. Approach them gently and handle them with care.



 **BE SURE TO WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANY REPTILES**

[View / Download Care Sheet as PDF](#)

Created in cooperation with the [Madison Area Herpetological Society, Inc.](#)
[madisonherps.org](#)

