



# Praying Mantis Care Sheet

## Chinese Praying Mantid

*(Tenodera aridifolia sinensis)*

### The Eggcase

#### Hatching your Eggcase:

Hatch the eggcase in a large (10+ gallon) container or aquarium. The container should be at least the size of a large Kritter Keeper. Put the container on its end to provide as much vertical space as possible. Be sure the container has a bit of ventilation, but make sure you cover all vents with fine mesh so there are no escapees. You want to create a warm, humid, greenhouse-like environment. Put a container of wet sand or a wet sponge in the bottom of the tank and place some twigs and branches inside that fit the entire length of the container. Make sure the branches will not fall (hot glue them into the tank?). Don't use tape because the babies' feet can get stuck. Attach the eggcase to one of the upper branches or top of the tank with glue or by loosely threading a string around a branch. You need to hang the eggcase so the front part where the babies hatch from is hanging down (the back will usually have a stick or a groove where the stick used to be). As the days go by keep the sand on the bottom of the tank moist and mist the tank with CLEAN, soap free water every day (use a new spray bottle). DO NOT have open puddles of water in the tank as the new born babies can drown in them. Place a lamp near the tank during the day or leave by a sunny window to provide extra heat (up to mid 80'sF). If left in a sunny window be sure it is not too hot as it can cook the eggcase! Let the temperature drop to room temperature at night (~70F). Bathrooms can be good places to hatch the eggcases as they are warm and humid.

When the babies hatch try to (lightly) mist them as soon as possible. They don't need to eat for a day or two, but will need to drink a few times a day right away. Introduce aphids or fruit flies to the babies on the second day and watch them eat. **We sell live flightless fruit fly cultures** or you can rear them on moist rotting fruit (banana/citrus/etc). The lifecycle of a fruit fly is seven days or less, depending on the temperature. To rear fruit flies, take a container or small bucket, add fruit and sprinkle with baking yeast, sugar, and warm water. The mixture needs to ferment. Cover the container with a lid that has small holes in it and make sure the compost does not dry out. Now the fruit flies will lay their eggs on the fruit and you are good to go... hopefully. If you have trouble getting the culture started check online. The babies will consume hundreds of fruit flies or aphids over the next 6 weeks so keep your fruit fly culture going by adding more fruit, sugar, and yeast occasionally.

If you are releasing your babies outside wait for a nice sunny, warm afternoon and then put them on an aphid infested plant.

**Good luck and have fun!**



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### The Baby

#### **About your new baby mantids:**

Your baby mantids will grow to be big and strong if you and feed and water them regularly and keep them warm. You won't know if you have a male or female until it is large enough to be able to count the number of abdominal segments. Males have eight segments and females have six. An adult mantid has fully developed wings and babies/juveniles do not have wings. Mantids can fly but generally only do so if they are frightened. Males are more likely to fly than females; the females' abdomen gets too large and heavy with eggs to fly. Female mantids have short antennae and large round abdomens. The males are very thin and have relatively long antennae. Handle your mantid frequently and it will provide you with hours of fascination. Be careful not to over handle it as a juvenile, especially when it is about to molt its exoskeleton. Moulting is a complex process and you want your mantids to have the best chance possible to moult correctly.

#### **Care and Maintenance of your new babies:**

The best way to get your mantid to sit on your hand is to gently coax it from behind. Never pick it up between two fingers as this frightens it and can injure it. The older the mantid the easier it is to handle (young like to jump/do flips). Your mantid will need you to mist the inside of their tank daily for water. Your mantid should be fed every day as it is maturing, and less often when it is an adult. Offer it an appropriately sized cricket or mealworm cut in half with tweezers. Sometimes it will refuse to eat. This usually means it will be molting soon or is just not hungry. Be careful to not disturb your mantis while it is molting as a "bad molt" can kill it.

Room temperature is fine, but they do like to "sun" themselves sometimes when the opportunity presents itself. If you are keeping it in a container, the home should be washed with vinegar and water occasionally. You should provide items for your mantid to crawl on, such as branches and plants. It is also possible to let you mantis have free run as long as there are not any open windows nearby. They tend to use one area as home base but can wander (usually going as high as possible).

You can buy mealworms or crickets to feed them. Keep mealworms in a container with bran and a bit of carrot or apple. Replace the apple if it goes bad or is consumed. Keep crickets in a container with a bit of lettuce/apple/fish food. Clean cricket container frequently. Again, check online for tips.

**Good luck and have fun!**