Leopard Gecko Vivarium – create an environment in 10 minutes

Reptiles · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/leopard-gecko-vivarium-create-an-environment-in-10-minutes/

A step by step guide to how Nigel set up this Leopard Gecko habitat.

For this Leopard Gecko vivarium set up you will need;

- Tools
  - a phillips head screwdriver
  - some gaffa tape
  - a marker pen
- Equipment
  - An empty vivarium
  - heat lamp holder
  - heat lamp (in this case a 13w uvb bulb)
  - a heat map
  - a mat thermostat
- Environment
  - Substrate (we used bio life desert)
  - rock (we used slate)
  - some spare pond piping
  - an arid plant
  - some wood

- leaf litter

Here's our selection;

[our leopard gecko vivarium equipment]

Pretty much everything this viv needed!

Firstly, start with your vivarium and take the glass doors out for now - they'll just make life difficult during the build.

Next, take the top off your viv and attach your light holder, remembering to run the wires from the inside out through the gaps build into the viv*. Your holder will need to be screwed into place so place the holder high up on one end of your vivarium and mark the spots you'll need to screw into to attach it using the marker pen.

*some plugs may be too big to get through the gaps provided. The product we used from Reptile Systems has a European converter plug. Unscrew the outer case, run the plug through the hole, then reattach the casing.

[european adapter plug]

They look like this.

Move the holder away and give each small screw a few turns to start your holes in the viv. Then remove the screws, put the holder back in place and replace the screws, making sure they screw firmly into place. Then put your bulb in.

Now place your heat mat and thermostat sensor at the same end as your heat lamp. Gaffa tape the heat map to the bottom of the viv and make sure your thermostat sensor is just above it. Again, be sure to run your leads through the gaps provided in the viv.

[leopard gecko vivarium with heat map and thermostat installed]

Our heat map was gaffa taped down with the thermostat sensor placed on top.

Once this is done and you've made sure your wires are tidy it's time for some substrate.

[bio life desert substrate for our leopard gecko vivarium]

We used Bio Life

[feel free to pile in lots of substrate to the vivarium]

Chuck it in

[make sure your thermostat sensor is lifted off the heat map but still buried in the substrate]

Make sure your stat is a little way off your heat mat

[your leopard gecko vivarium substrate should look like this to begin with]

Make sure you've got it all covered

With this habitat Nigel wanted to create a warm end and a cool end. In this instance the right hand side is the warm end and the left is the cool end. There's no right or wrong way around but you'll notice Nigel prefers his heat on the right hand side of all the set ups he creates!

Now it's time to start creating an environment within your Leopard Gecko vivarium.

Nigel's top tips for creating a good habitat;

1. Look closely at the natural environment of the animal. In almost every case keepers use too little 'hardscape' (rocks and wood and general 'stuff'). Get stuck in and enjoy building up an environment.
2. Don't get caught up with the idea of large structures you need to silicon in place or glue together. They're a pain when it comes to cleaning, feeding, and maintenance. Also, you may want to rearrange things from time to time!
3. Layer up your floor. Nature is very rarely flat so pop in some ridges and raised areas - this also allows you to play around with 'underground' elements. Like this!

[a spare bit of pond piping makes a great tunnel for your leopard gecko vivarium!]

A bit of old pond pipe makes a great tunnel to explore.

Next up it's time for some rocks. Nigel spent a little more than 10 minutes playing around with this because it's fun! But it could be done quicker. We used a large bit of slate which we broke into shards to put together to form a structure that offered plenty of hiding places and climbable surfaces.

[natural rocks like this slate always looks better in vivariums]

some lovely slate

[start with the bigger pieces at the back of the vivarium to create hiding places]

start with the biggies at the back creating hiding place

[once your hiding places are sorted use more rocks to create basking ledges]

more hiding places and some ledges to bask on

[finish the whole look off by adding more rocks - make sure they're stable, though!]

creating a more natural landscape

With this viv being arid it is important to stick to what would naturally occur in an arid landscape. Nigel chose one arid plant to put into his habitat. Then he tossed some leaf litter over everything. Be careful not to 'arrange' things too much. When it comes to planting just take the plant out of its pot and push it straight into the substrate. This substrate is 'active' meaning it has nutrients in it that will support the plant.

[adding arid plants can make all the difference to a leopard gecko vivarium setup]

just push your arid plant into place and press firmly around the base of the plant

[just push the arid plant directly into the substrate and push down firmly around the base to plant it]

looking good!

For the final touches Nigel selected a bit of petrified oak to add a bit of balance to the set up, popped a water bowl in and there it was! Our Leopard Gecko vivarium all done in no time at all and looking fantastic!

[pick several bits of wood to work with and then pick your favourite once you've tried a few out in the vivarium]

Nigel picking his wood

[don't worry if your vivarium looks a bit wrong. play around with your setup until you're happy]

not quite there...

[a leopard gecko vivarium shouldn't be symmetrical but a balance across the setup is attractive]

turn it around and there we go!

[our leopard gecko vivarium took around 15 minutes to put together from start to finish]

Our finished vivarium!

Nigel is an expert, knows exactly what he's doing and, if anything, was slowed down by Martin buzzing around taking pictures and asking questions in his ear - but it really is this simple to create a wonderful habitat for your beloved pets.

UP next, you'll want to be feeding them! If you want to know how much you should be feeding your pet lizards read this article.

We'd love to see some examples of the setups you've made at home - make sure to tag us on social media when you show them off!