

# What to Put In Your Aquaria

## **Adding organisms:**

1. Assuming the water is at or near 12 °C you can add a crab or a few mussels. They are your trial animals to see if they remain alive. These animals will inoculate your tank with marine bacteria that can help remove nutrients from the tank. The bacteria will grow in the tank and also on the zeolite and activated charcoal in the back chamber and remove nutrients like ammonia. Wait 3 or 4 days before you add other animals.
2. After 3 or 4 days you can add more organisms; the key is not to add too many, and to introduce them a few at a time. You might want to add 2 or 3 anemones on rocks and a few hermit crabs and then wait another few days before you add more.
3. See the following list of recommended organisms.

**Choosing organisms:** *Note that adding rocks provides additional habitat and hiding places. For added interest, choose rocks with attached organisms, such as mussels, barnacles, and anemones.*

**Most Ideal Animals for aquaria (these will live well and for a long time if the system is cared for and animals are fed regularly – e.g. twice a week)**

Anemones and corals (usually best collected attached to cobble or rock, all will eat appropriately sized chunks of mussel placed on tentacles)

Large green surf anemone (*Anthopleura xanthogramica*)

Pink tipped anemone (*Anthopleura elegantissima*)

Painted anemone (*Urticina crassicornis*)

Brooding anemone (*Epiastis* sp.)

Orange cup corals (*Balanophyllia elegans*)

## Mollusks

Snails – coiled snails and limpets (eat barnacles and algae)

Keyhole limpets (eat sponges)

Seaslugs or nudibranchs (various – eat sponges and hydroids)

Rock scallops (suspension feeders)

Chitons – (but not big gumboot chitons)

## Crustacea

Barnacles (on rocks, suspension feeders)

Hermit crabs (found in tidepools - scavengers)

Small crabs (carapace width up to 2 inches) – red rock, Dungeness, spider, decorator (will eat chunks of mussel) -avoid shore crabs b/c they crawl out

Shrimp

## Echinoderms

Small purple sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*) – (algae)

Small red urchins (*S. franciscanus*) – (algae)

Small six-armed sea star (*Leptasterias hexactis*) (will eat chunks of mussel)

Small 5 armed ochre star (*Pisaster ochraceus*) (will eat chunks of mussel)

Blood star (*Henricia* sp.) – eats sponges and hydroids

Daisy brittle star (*Ophiopholis aculeata*) – (suspension feeder)  
California sea cucumber (*Parastichopus californicus*) – (mops up tank bottom)  
Red sea cucumber (*Cucumaria miniata*) (suspension feeder)

Tide pool fish (probably not more than 5 to 7 total)

Sculpins, snail fish, clingfish, small (juvenile) rockfish, pipefish.

**Short duration organisms (cool to see but probably will not last)**

Jellyfish – small, up to 3-inch diameter. (They will not last more than a day or two but are fun to watch.)

Feather Duster worms (from Charleston docks) (suspension feeders)

Hydroids (from Charleston docks) (suspension feeders)

Sponges –only add small amounts at a time, as some sponges may be toxic.

Attached marine algae up to 6 or 8 inches long (not kelps except blades for urchin food).

The lighting is not the right kind to have these remain healthy.