

Madagascar hissing cockroach

Quick-start & maintenance · *Gromphadorhina portentosa* · a beginner-friendly insect that lives 2 to 5 years

Hisser Lab
hisserlab.com

ADULT SIZE
2 to 3 in

LIFESPAN
2 to 5 yrs

TEMPERATURE
72 to 85 °F

HUMIDITY
50 to 70%

ENCLOSURE
5 to 10 gal, lidded

EFFORT
10 to 15 min/wk

Enclosure setup

- Tank: 5 to 10 gallon glass or plastic for a few adults.
- Lid: secure and ventilated. They climb glass, so add a 2 in petroleum-jelly band around the inside top edge.
- Substrate: 1 to 2 in coconut fiber or aspen. Avoid cedar and pine.
- Hides: cork bark, a half log, or egg-carton pieces. They are nocturnal and wedge in by day.
- Heat: room temperature is usually fine; never below 65 °F. Breeding happens only at the warm end.

Feeding

- Fresh produce 2 to 3 times a week: carrot, apple, leafy greens, banana peel. Oranges are a favorite.
- A pinch of dry dog kibble now and then adds protein.
- Remove uneaten produce within 48 hours.
- Water: no open dish (nymphs drown). Use water-gel crystals or a damp sponge or cotton ball.

Handling & safety

- Docile: they do not bite or sting. Move slowly and let the animal walk hand to hand.
- Stay within a foot of a table so a fall cannot crack the shell.
- If the feet are gripping, wait for release rather than pulling.
- Wash hands after handling. Do not handle a freshly molted (white, soft) animal.

Maintenance schedule

Daily	Glance for health; pull any spoiled food; confirm warmth.
2 to 3 days	Refresh the water source; mist lightly in dry climates.
Weekly	Offer fresh produce 2 to 3 times; remove leftovers; spot-clean waste and mold.
Monthly	Full substrate change; wipe enclosure walls; check the lid and climb barrier.
As needed	Re-apply the petroleum-jelly band; give a molting (white) animal space until it hardens.

What is normal

- Molting: about six times while growing. The animal is soft and ghost-white for a few hours after each molt, then darkens.
- Mites: tiny pale hitchhikers are usually harmless commensals living on crumbs. No treatment needed.
- Hissing: made by forcing air through abdominal spiracles. Normal when startled, during male contests, and in courtship.

Warnings

- Never release a hisser, or any classroom animal, into the wild.
- Shipping: we cannot ship to Florida; other states may restrict this species. Check local rules before rehoming across state lines.
- Keep a secure lid at all times. An escapee cannot breed in a home, but it is a nuisance to recover.

