

# Millipedes

## Giant Tropical Millipede

**Species:** *gigas*

**Genus:** *Archispirostreptus*

**Family:** Spirostreptidae

**Order:** Spirostreptida

**Class:** Diplopoda

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Kingdom:** Animalia

## North American Millipede

**Species:** *ornatus*

**Genus:** *Orthoporus*

**Family:** Spirostreptidae

**Order:** Spirostreptida

**Class:** Diplopoda

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Kingdom:** Animalia



## Conditions for Customer Ownership

We are a USDA compliant facility and hold all necessary permits to transport our organisms. Each state is assisted by the USDA to determine which organisms can be transported across state lines. Some organisms may require end-user permits. Please contact your local regulatory authorities with questions or concerns. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

- **Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.** Live specimens should not be released into the wild! Please dispose of any unwanted organisms using the guidelines below.
- Giant tropical millipedes are considered a plant pest by the United States Department of Agriculture. In order to continue to protect our environment you must house your millipede in an escape-proof container. Under no circumstances should you release your millipede into the wild.
- North American millipedes are not restricted in the United States. No importation into Canada is allowed.

## Primary Hazard Considerations

Millipedes are gentle creatures and will not bite when handled. They have weak mandibles and can occasionally give a light pinch when hungry. They will usually curl up for protection when they are disturbed. If severely disturbed, the millipede may secrete a yellowish-brown substance from glands along the sides of its body. This secretion may cause mild skin irritation, so be careful not to get it in your eyes, and thoroughly wash your hands after handling the millipede. The millipedes may also have some mites that can be observed moving rapidly over the millipede's exoskeleton. These white mites are completely harmless to humans, and are a symbiotic organism of the millipede. The mites will not infest you or other animals. If the population seems excessive, simply wipe them off the millipede with a piece of cotton dampened in warm water.

## Availability

Millipedes are generally available year-round, but they are collected from the wild so occasional shortages may occur. Your giant tropical millipedes will be 6–8" long when they arrive. Your North American millipedes will be 2–4" long. They should either be crawling around or tightly coiled up. They cannot survive temperatures below about 40°F or above 90°F for very long periods of time. Your millipedes will arrive in a plastic jar with damp paper towels or moss. Upon arrival you should place your millipedes into a new home and mist them down. Millipedes can live in the shipping container for about 3–5 days.

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## Captive Care

### Habitat:

- A glass or plastic terrarium with a ventilated lid is perfect for millipedes; a 3–5-gallon tank works well. Millipedes can live communally, with 3–4 able to live together in a 10-gallon tank. Millipedes do best in a temperature ranging from 70°–80°F (21°–27°C) with high humidity (75–80%). Cover the bottom of the tank with 3–4" of organic soil, which can be topped with an inch or so of sphagnum peat (470014-980) or EcoEarth. Be sure that none of the materials have been chemically treated. Include at least one stick for climbing. Soak all of the wood thoroughly with water so that the whole habitat is damp and humid, but not so much that there is standing water on the bottom. Use spring or pond water, or tap water left standing for 24 hours. Keep your millipede out of direct light. Clean the habitat about once per month by rinsing all the substrate or replacing it as necessary, and washing the container out.

### Care:

- Millipedes are primarily herbivorous, feeding on both living and decomposing vegetation. They may not eat pine bark because of the resins present, but if you have included hardwoods in the habitat, millipedes will certainly feed on them. Older, rotten wood is not only allowable, but may be preferred by some specimens. Millipedes can be maintained with nothing more than this damp wood in the habitat, so they can go without any other food for long periods of time. However, it is recommended that you round out their diet with a weekly offering of fruit or vegetable scraps (cucumber or potato slices are a favorite, 1 half inch slice per millipede) and a supply of calcium, like calcium powder or cuttlebone Reptivite Reptile Vitamins for maintaining good health. A small bowl of dry dog food should be placed in the habitat. A shallow bowl of water should be offered as well.

### Information

- **Method of reproduction:** Millipedes reproduce sexually. The male walks along the sides of the female, and if she is receptive, they wrap around each other and mate. A few weeks later the female will lay hundreds of eggs just under the surface of the ground and cover them with a protective coating.
- **Determining sex:** Male millipedes' sex organs are on the seventh segment of their body, so they have a space between the legs on this segment. Female's legs are uniformly spaced on all body segments.

### Life Cycle

It takes about three months for a millipede egg to hatch. Hatchlings have only a few pairs of legs and are short in length. They take several years to grow to full size. In captivity a millipede can live to be ten years old, but most specimens are wild-collected so it is impossible to predict how long one will live.

### Wild Habitat

- Giant tropical millipedes are found in tropical regions of Africa. Millipedes are generally nocturnal and live in dark, damp areas. They forage on fresh and decaying plant material. Predators of millipedes are scorpions, lizards, frogs, and birds.
- North American millipedes live in deserts in the southwestern U.S. They are nocturnal and live in burrows that they dig themselves.

### Special Notes

- Millipedes are Arthropods, and exhibit basic characteristics of the phylum including a rigid exoskeleton and jointed appendages that are common to other members such as crustaceans and insects. Millipedes are in the class Myriapoda (literally "many feet") and the subclass Diplopoda. They have two pairs of legs on most body segments. Compared to centipedes, millipedes have many more body segments. There are about 8,000 species of millipedes worldwide; 800 species in North America alone, all of which are terrestrial and most of which are found in the tropics.

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## Disposition

### **Do not release this organism into the environment.**

- Adoption is the preferred disposition of a millipede. If a capable owner cannot adopt the millipede as a pet, it may be surrendered to your local humane society.

### **If your millipede requires euthanasia, use one of the following methods:**

- Place millipede in a freezer for 48 hours.
- Place millipede in 70% isopropyl alcohol for 24 hours.
- Autoclave millipede @ 121°C for 15 minutes.
- It can then be wrapped and disposed of with general garbage, away from students.