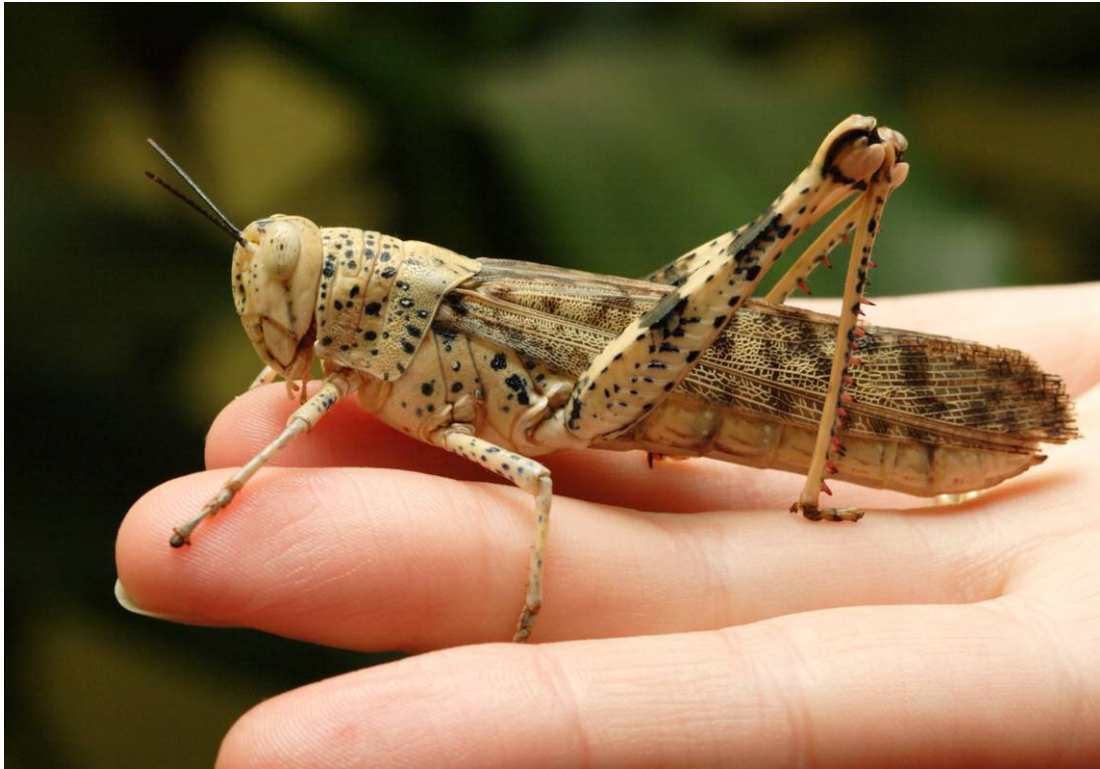


Care guide

Giant Grasshopper, *Valanga irregularis*



Giant Grasshoppers are found through the north eastern tropics and across semi-arid regions of northern Australia. They are extremely variable in colour and pattern, and may be rich yellow and bright green as nymphs. They are quite adaptable too, and feed on a wide variety of plants, both native and introduced. As the name suggests they are large powerful insects, the larger females may reach 90mm in body length.

They spend the daylight hours sitting within foliage and will often bask in the sun to warm up, and then move into shade during the hottest part of the day. They will feed on plant material both day and night, and will jump long distances if disturbed.

Smaller males seek out females in order to mate, and cling to the females back while copulating. Once fertilised, females will lay masses of eggs in the ground surrounded by protective foam. The tip of the female's abdomen is equipped with small digging tools which enable her to drive her abdomen deep into the soil to lay eggs in a safe moist position.

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Food: A wide variety of live or freshly cut common plants including: Happy Wanderer (*Hardenbergia violacea*), Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*), Banksia Rose (*Rosa banksiae*), Tree Lucerne (*Cytisus proliferus*) and various grasses. Ensure garden plants have not been treated with pesticide before offering. They will also feed on Orthopteran food mix.

Water: Mist spray the enclosure once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp and the humidity high. The grasshoppers will drink from the moisture on the foliage and branches.

Enclosure: The ideal enclosure should favour height over length and needs to be about 25 cm H x 35 cm W x 20 cm L. The base of the enclosure should be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from garden supply shops). To allow for egg laying this substrate needs to be a depth of at least 8cm. Part of the substrate (one end) always needs to be kept damp (not wet), which will create a gradient of moisture from one end to the other. This allows the grasshoppers to choose the most appropriate sites to lay eggs. You may like to set-up some firm branches for the grasshoppers to climb upon in addition to the food plants.

Temperature: This species requires warm conditions (mid 20's) and does best if given a range of temperatures throughout the enclosure. The provision of a basking lamp at one end of the enclosure is recommended.

Life span: About 1-2 years.

Handling: This species can be handled but are a little unpredictable and may jump without warning. They can also deliver a powerful kick with their spiny hind legs, and may lose limbs if handled roughly.

Reproduction: This species can be housed in groups, so once mature mating will occur between pairs. Females will poke their abdomens down into the substrate and deposit eggs into suitable sites. Hatching may take several months depending on substrate temperatures (mid 20's are ideal). The hatchling grasshoppers will shed their exoskeletons as they emerge from the ground and will begin to feed on the same food as the adults within 24 hours.

Common issues: If keeping these grasshoppers in groups, ensure that there is sufficient space for individuals to perch, feed and moult without interrupting each other. Moulting mishaps (deformities) may occur in cases of over crowding.

NOTE: These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild.

For more information contact Minibeast Wildlife at info@minibeastwildlife.com.au