

Good First Tortoise

Three choices for a your first tortoise as a pet.

By Bill Love

1) An African spurred tortoise, also known as a spurred tortoise or sulcata tortoise, is an ideal first tortoise except for the fact that it can attain an unwieldy size after about seven years. They are unbeatably hardy if you have an outdoor pen large enough to hold it comfortably as it grows. Winter can be an obstacle if you have to bring it indoors and contain it for three to four months.

African spurred, or sulcata.

2) The red-footed tortoise rarely exceeds 12 inches in length. Red-footed tortoises are hardy, have personality and are attractive (some more than others). Many captive-bred red-footed tortoises are offered.

Red-footed.

3) A healthy Russian tortoise can be a great first tortoise. Most available are wild-caught imports that tend to adapt poorly. Skip the Russian tortoise until more captive-bred examples are available in the reptile trade. If you can acquire a captive-bred or long-term captive that's established and already doing well, then go for it!

Russian.