

October 2009 Editor's Note

Reasons why bearded dragons are super popular pets

By Russ Case

I remember when REPTILES magazine first started publishing in 1993, and the green iguana was loudly touted as being the most popular lizard pet. A few things have changed since then.

Here we are 16 years later, and though green iguanas are still widely kept, hobbyists realized (due in part to educational articles in REPTILES magazine) that green iguanas needed some fairly specialized care in order to thrive in captivity. Their eventual large size, 6 feet or longer, was also driven home, and impulse purchases of green iguanas were widely discouraged.

Meanwhile, the humble bearded dragon took the reptile pet industry by storm. This lizard has so much going for it that makes it a perfect reptile pet. It inhabits an arid environment, and this often requires less effort to recreate than does a tropical environment. Eating both insects and plant matter, it is very easy to feed due to its omnivorous nature. Also, let's face it: It can be fun to watch lizards scurrying around catching crickets, and bearded dragons definitely do not disappoint in this area. Then there is the famous bearded dragon temperament — talk about a mellow lizard. An adult male green iguana can get testy, especially during breeding season, but the bearded dragon is famous for being docile and very tolerant of handling. Lastly, *Pogona vitticeps*, attaining a maximum length around 2 feet, doesn't get anywhere near as large as a green iguana.

All of these qualities have deservedly cemented the bearded dragon's place within the pantheon of the most popular reptile pets of all time. If you haven't yet kept one, you should!

Bearded dragon breeder Nick Agricoli refers to the bearded dragon as the "Labrador of lizards." It's a perfectly accurate description of this favorite lizard pet.