

## Rainforest Tortoises

Red-Foot Tortoise (*Chelanoïdes carbonaria*)

Hingeback Tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*)

Elongated Tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*)

**Origins:** Red-Foot tortoises originate from the rainforests of South America, distributed from Panama to Northern-Arentina. They are named due to the bright red scales on the legs. Hingeback tortoises have a wide distribution in Africa from Senegal to Madagascar. Elongated tortoises are an Asian species and occur over a wide area from Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia and Vietnam. They are non-hibernating tortoises, and so require winter housing areas.

**Adult Size and Life Span:** As with all tortoises, if these animals are correctly cared for, they should have a lifespan of up to 60 - 80 years. Male and female Red-foots typically reach a length of up to 30cm (12") and are large, heavy tortoises. Hingebacks are smaller and reach a maximum of around 20cm (8"). Elongated tortoises show differences in male and female sizes, with males reaching 33cm (13") and females 29cm (11").

**Diet and Feeding:** Red-foot tortoises are an omnivorous species and should be fed a variety of foodstuffs. Suitable foods are dandelions, clover and other weeds, fruits such as apple, banana, orange and melon and a small quantity of protein such as peas and soaked, dry dog-meal. Hingeback and Elongated tortoises are again omnivorous and so require a similar diet – they especially prefer mushrooms, slugs, snails, fruit and earthworms. All foodstuffs offered should be dusted with a calcium supplement such as Nutrobal, to ensure the correct levels are maintained in the diet for strong and healthy bones and shell. Calcium in the form of chalk or cuttlefish can also be offered as a more natural source. Always provide fresh, clean water in a shallow bowl.

## Swallow Aquatics Caresheet

Bathing these tortoises regularly in lukewarm water will be beneficial to them.

**Housing Set Up:** These tortoises require a heated vivarium (when small) or greenhouse/heated shed (when larger) for overcast, cooler days and winter months. It is also essential to provide an outdoor pen, with access to natural grazing. See the diagrams below for these set-ups.

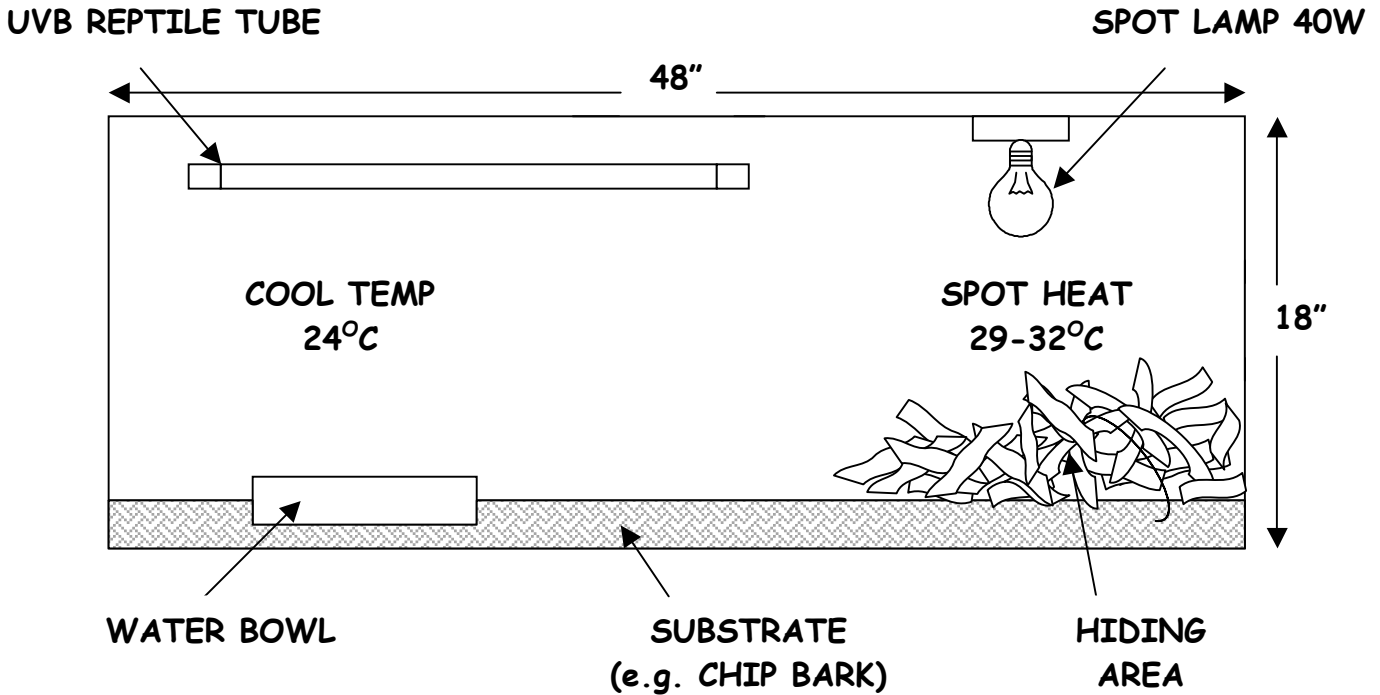
**Indoor Vivariums:** A good size vivarium for a juvenile tortoise is a 36" x 18" x 18" or 48" x 18" x 18" as these provide a large bottom surface area. Within these set ups, there must be:-

**Heating:** Daytime temperatures must reach 85 - 90°F (29 - 33 °C) in the hot spots, with cool spots of 68 - 75°F (20 - 23.9°C). This is achieved via spot bulbs or infra-red ceramic bulbs at the hot-end of the vivarium. Temperatures can drop to normal room temperature at night. The water bowl must be placed in the cooler end of the vivarium.

**Lighting:** A UV-B bulb is essential to ensure that vitamin D<sub>3</sub> is correctly synthesised and the animal will maintain a strong skeleton. Use a Reptiglo 8.0 bulb, across the back of the vivarium, for 10 -12 hours per day as a simulation of natural daylength.

**Substrate and Decoration:** Rainforest tortoises require a humid environment, with a deep substrate, which can be achieved via orchid bark and compost mixes. Use rocks and cork bark to create hiding areas and interest for climbing, but be careful to avoid anything that may easily go mouldy. Regular spraying and the use of a large water bowl will help to maintain the correct humidity levels. The substrate should be changed and removed when dirty.

## Swallow Aquatics Caresheet

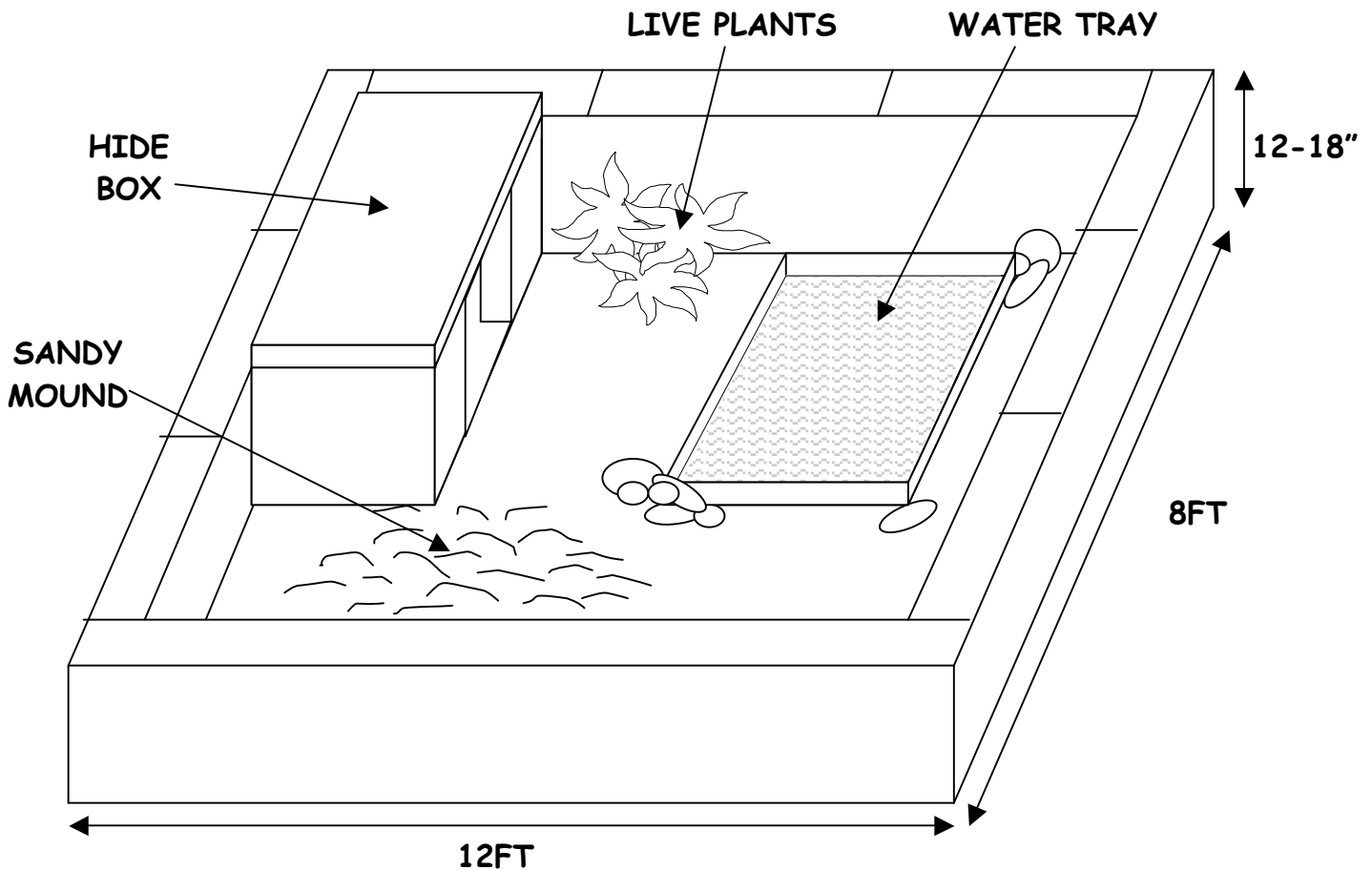


### **Outdoor pen enclosure:**

The outdoor pen can be constructed from a variety of materials – wood, stone or breeze blocks. The measurements given here are a rough guide, and you should give your tortoise as much room as you can possibly provide. As with the indoor vivariums a shallow water bowl/tray and hide box should be provided. The substrate can be primarily compost to maintain the humidity outside. The hide box will also provide a shelter for the tortoise from wind or rain. When the tortoise is adult, the hide box should be replaced by a heated shed or greenhouse.

Live plants and sand/soil mounds can also be included to create areas of interest, but care should be taken to protect the outdoor enclosure from predators such as foxes, rats and large birds. Ensure the walls of the pen are dug approximately six inches into the ground to prevent the tortoise digging its way to freedom – most tortoises are excellent climbers and diggers!

## Swallow Aquatics Caresheet



**Hibernation:** These tortoises do not hibernate.

**Further Information and Advice:** It is recommended that you read and gain as much information as possible before purchasing your tortoise. Books and reliable websites are good sources, or alternatively ask a member of staff.

Some of the best are: -

- o Practical Encyclopaedia of Keeping and Breeding Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles, by Andy Highfield
- o The Tortoise Trust Website [www.tortoisetrust.org.uk](http://www.tortoisetrust.org.uk)

There are also two Tortoise Clubs open to owners and enthusiasts of all tortoise species. One runs in Norfolk and one in Suffolk – please ask a member of staff for more details.

It is important that if you do have a problem with your tortoise, you consult a good, knowledgeable vet. Swallow Aquatics knows many of the practices in the surrounding area, so if you require advice, please ask a member of staff.

Phone advice is also available from Swallow Aquatics 9am-6pm, 7 days a week on 01953 718184.