

### Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*)

**Origins:** Bearded dragons originate from the deserts of Australia and inhabit rocky areas but also like to climb a great deal – they are very active animals. They are mainly insectivorous when very young but become more herbivorous as they age. They are very tameable and can be hand fed, so make good pets.

**Adult Size and Life Span:** Bearded dragons can become around 60cm (24") long adults and can live for around 20 years. They can live in colonies of one male to several females to prevent territory disputes. It must be ensured that all animals are of a similar size to prevent cannibalism.

**Diet and Feeding:** In captivity, bearded dragons will readily eat brown and black (when adult) crickets, locusts and mealworms. If you can guarantee the area has not been treated with insecticides, any grassland can be swept for a selection of native insects such as grasshoppers, moths and hairless caterpillars. Crickets can be fed every day, but mealworms only once a week. Natural weeds, fruits and vegetables can also be provided – dandelions, clover, plantains, apple, carrot, cabbage etc. All food must be dusted with a calcium and vitamin D<sub>3</sub> supplement such as Nutrobal to ensure healthy development of bones. Fresh, clean water should be supplied daily.

**Vivarium Set Up:** It is recommended that a 36" x 15" x 18" vivarium is obtained to house juvenile bearded dragon(s), but adults will need something much larger, for example 36" x 24" x 48". Basic layouts are shown in the diagrams. Within these set ups, there must be:-

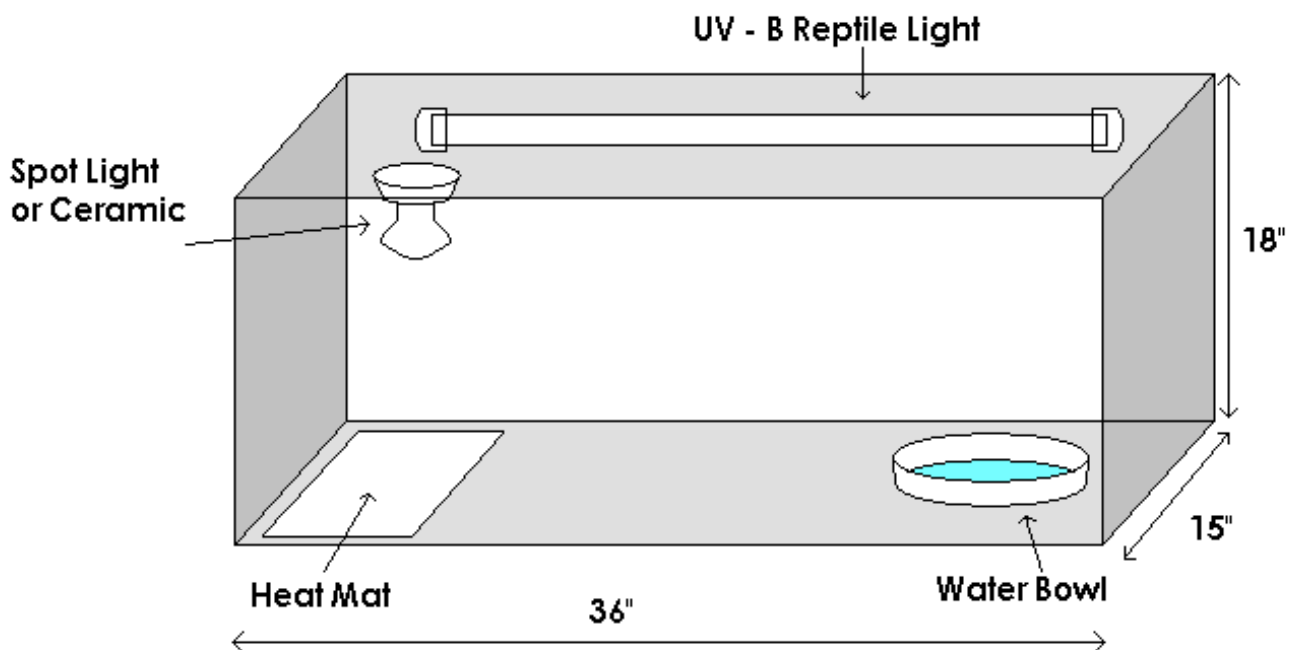
**Heating:** Daytime temperatures must reach 85 - 90°F (29 - 33 °C) in the hot spots, with cool spots of to 80 - 85°F (26 – 29°C). This is achieved via spot bulbs, heat mats or infra-red ceramic

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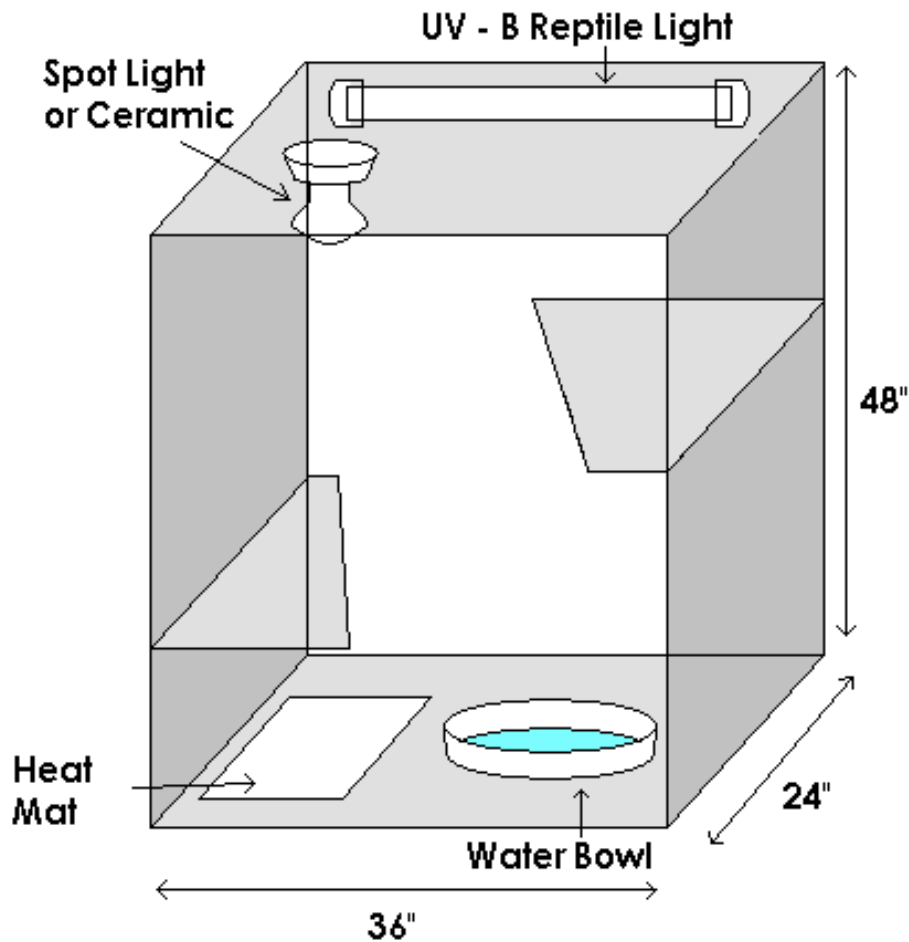
bulbs at the hot-end of the vivarium. Temperatures of 75°F (24 °C) should be maintained at night using one of these methods, and a thermostat may be required for control. The water bowl must be placed in the cooler end of the vivarium.

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 5.0 bulb, across the back of the vivarium, for 10 -12 hours per day as a simulation of natural daylength.

Substrate and Decoration: Bearded dragons require a dry, desert habitat, which can be achieved via beech chip, gravel or sand. Use rocks, wood, branches and cork bark to create caves and interest for climbing. Some desert plant species can be used e.g. cacti, succulents and spurges, but be aware that these may be nibbled!



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**Further Information and Advice:** It is recommended that you read and gain as much information as possible before purchasing your bearded dragon. Books and reliable websites are good sources, or alternatively ask a member of staff. Phone advice is available 9am-6pm, 7 days a week on 01953 718184.