## **YVCipedia REPTILE**

Green Tree Python Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Green Tree Python (*Morelia viridis*)** is an **arboreal, non-venomous python** native to New Guinea, parts of Indonesia, and Australia. Famous for their **vivid green coloration** (with variations in blue, yellow, or white markings), these snakes are masters of camouflage in dense, humid forests.

They are **strictly arboreal**, spending most of their lives perched on branches in a classic looped pose. Green Tree Pythons are **beautiful but advanced-care reptiles** due to their **specific humidity and temperature needs** and tendency to stress if handled excessively.

With proper care, they typically grow **4–6 feet** long and can live **15–20+ years** in captivity.

## **Housing & Environment**

Green Tree Pythons need **tall, secure, well-ventilated enclosures** designed for **vertical climbing**.

**Minimum enclosure size:**

* Juveniles: 20-gallon tall terrarium
* Adults: At least **24–36 inches tall × 24–36 inches wide × 18–24 inches deep**
* Larger enclosures encourage natural behaviors

**Essential enclosure features:**

* Multiple sturdy, horizontally oriented perches at different heights
* Secure doors or lids to prevent escapes
* Good airflow to prevent stagnant humidity and respiratory issues
* Dense plant cover (live or artificial) for security

**Recommended substrates:**

* Coconut husk or cypress mulch for humidity retention
* Paper towels or butcher paper for easy cleaning in clinical setups
* Sphagnum moss in humid hides

**Cleaning guidelines:**

* Spot-clean daily to remove waste
* Replace substrate fully and disinfect the enclosure monthly or as needed

## **Heating & Lighting**

Green Tree Pythons rely on **heat gradients** to regulate their metabolism but are **sensitive to overheating**.

**Temperature gradient:**

* **Basking spot:** 86–88°F
* **Ambient daytime:** 78–82°F
* **Cool side or lower area:** 72–75°F
* **Nighttime:** Can safely drop to 70–75°F

**Heating:**

* Overhead radiant heat panels or ceramic emitters preferred for safe, gentle warmth
* Under-tank heat is not typically recommended for arboreal setups
* All heat sources should be **thermostat-controlled**

**Lighting:**

* Green Tree Pythons are **nocturnal** but benefit from a **consistent day/night cycle**
* UVB is **optional**, but **low-level UVB (2–5%) may offer health benefits**
* Use timers for **12-hour light/dark cycles**

## **Humidity**

These tropical snakes need **high humidity** in the **50–80%** range, with **spikes up to ~90%** during misting.

**Humidity management tips:**

* Daily light misting to maintain levels
* Large water dish to boost ambient humidity
* Live plants help maintain humidity naturally
* Provide a **humid hide** with damp sphagnum moss
* Monitor with **digital hygrometers** for accuracy

Avoid sustained, excessively wet conditions that encourage mold or respiratory infections.

## **Water & Hydration**

Green Tree Pythons require **fresh, clean water** at all times.

**Water guidelines:**

* Use a sturdy, tip-resistant bowl large enough for drinking but easy to clean
* Change water daily to prevent bacterial growth
* Clean and disinfect the water bowl weekly or more often if soiled
* Misting also provides droplets for the snake to drink from leaves and perches

## **Diet & Feeding**

Green Tree Pythons are **strict carnivores** that feed on whole prey. In captivity, they thrive on **appropriately sized frozen/thawed rodents**.

**Feeding guidelines:**

* Prey ≈ 1–1.25× the widest part of the snake’s body
* Juveniles: Feed every 5–7 days
* Adults: Feed every 10–14 days

**Feeding tips:**

* Always feed **appropriately thawed prey** to avoid injuries and digestive issues
* Use long feeding tongs to deliver prey to the perch safely
* Feed in the enclosure to reduce handling stress
* Avoid handling for **48–72 hours after feeding** to prevent regurgitation

Green Tree Pythons may refuse food during **breeding seasons or sheds**—this can be normal if the snake remains healthy overall.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Green Tree Pythons are **naturally defensive and stress-prone** when over-handled. They often strike if startled or disturbed during rest.

**Handling recommendations:**

* Best kept as **display animals** with limited handling
* When necessary, use **gentle, slow movements** to avoid startling
* Always support the body on a perch when moving the snake
* Use a snake hook to encourage movement safely
* Keep handling sessions brief and infrequent to minimize stress

Over-handling can lead to **chronic stress, poor feeding response, and health issues**.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Plan for an **initial veterinary exam** after acquisition and **annual wellness visits** with a reptile-experienced veterinarian.

**Common health issues:**

* Respiratory infections (linked to poor ventilation or improper temps/humidity)
* Mouth rot (stomatitis) from injuries or bacterial overgrowth
* Shedding problems (dysecdysis) due to low humidity
* Mites and other external parasites
* Obesity from overfeeding

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or weakness
* Persistent refusal to eat
* Wheezing, open-mouth breathing, nasal discharge
* Excessive striking or defensive behavior changes
* Retained shed, especially around the eyes
* Swelling or lesions in the mouth

Early veterinary care helps **prevent complications** and supports long-term health.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Green Tree Pythons **thrive in complex, vertical environments** that support their natural behaviors.

**Enrichment strategies:**

* Multiple, sturdy perches at varying heights and orientations
* Dense foliage for security and shade
* Hides on different levels to support thermoregulation and humidity preferences
* Naturalistic décor rearranged occasionally to encourage exploration
* Timed misting or rainfall systems to simulate natural humidity cycles

A well-designed, enriched enclosure reduces **stress** and encourages **natural posturing and activity**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Famous for **bright green adult coloration**—juveniles may be **red, yellow, or brown**.
* Native to **tropical forests** in New Guinea, Indonesia, and Australia.
* **Strictly arboreal**, spending nearly all their time perched in the wild.
* Known for **classic “resting loop” pose** on horizontal branches.
* Lifespan of **15–20+ years** in captivity with proper care.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Tall, secure enclosure (≥24–36 inches recommended for adults)
* Sturdy, horizontal perches at multiple heights
* Escape-proof doors or lids with good ventilation
* Thermostats for all heat sources
* Digital thermometers and hygrometers
* Ceramic heat emitters or radiant heat panels
* Appropriate substrate (coconut husk, cypress mulch, paper)
* Humid hide with damp moss
* Large, stable water dish
* Misting system or spray bottle for daily humidity maintenance
* Feeding tongs for safe prey offering
* Frozen/thawed appropriately sized rodents
* Cleaning supplies and reptile-safe disinfectants
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*