

Cherry Shrimp Care Guide [#1 Resource For Beginners]

Cherry shrimp doesn't require constant maintenance. However, if you want to keep them, you'll have to know how to take proper care of them. I've been keeping cherry shrimps for many years now. I know they can be pretty forgiving. However, if you can't maintain some of the basic things for your cherry shrimps, they can even die.

So, I decided to help all the cherry shrimps and their keepers around the world. In this post, my goal is to present you with such a cherry shrimp care guide that you'll gain my years of knowledge and experience in just the time it takes to read the article.

Not only that, I'll also provide a printable short-version of this care guide so that you can print it out and study later. There will also be some infographics and illustrations so that you actually can provide the finest care to your cherry shrimps.

Before even starting the guide, let me say that this guide will be pretty long and detailed. So, take some time to go through it. If you can't go through the whole guide in a single sit, it's okay. Just bookmark the page and come back where you left off before.

Now that everything is already said, let's get to the good stuff. Here's my detailed guide on how to take care of cherry shrimps.

Cherry Shrimp Overview

The scientific name of cherry shrimp is *Neocardina Heteropoda*. Cherry shrimp is a type of freshwater dwarf shrimp. They are native among the Taiwan region.

The *Atyidae* invertebrate family includes cherry shrimp along with 20 other species of dwarf freshwater shrimps. Cherry shrimps are very peaceful, colorful and kept in the aquarium for their algae-cleaning capability.

If you are a beginner shrimp keeper, cherry shrimps will be the perfect choice for you. They introduce wonderful color variations to the aquarium. In the native, you can find these shrimps in a wide range of colors. However, in the aquarium world, we mainly see the deep red coloration of cherry shrimps, otherwise known as red cherry shrimps RCS.

Cherry shrimps are very hardy compared to other shrimp species. They can withstand a wide range of water parameters and [live for up to 1-2 years](#) in captivity. You can know more about [cherry shrimps here](#).

Here is a short chart regarding cherry shrimp overview:

Scientific Name	<i>Neocardina Heteropoda</i>
Commonly Known As	Cherry Shrimp
Care Level	Easy
Lifespan	1-2 years
Size	about 1.5 inches
Temperament	peaceful
Color	Mainly red, but also found in other coloration in the wild

Cherry Shrimp Appearance

Color

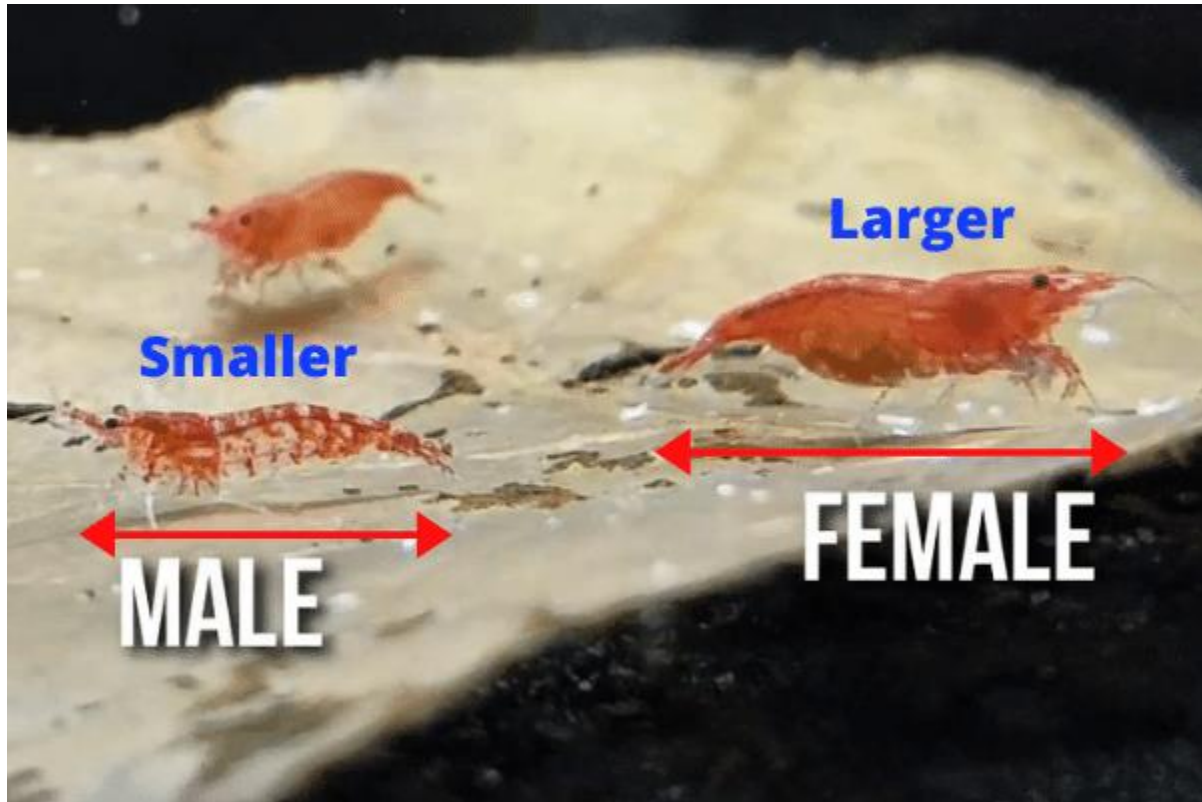


When talking about the appearance of cherry shrimps, the most obvious thing is their color. Cherry shrimps are generally [red in color](#). The redness depends on their grading. As a result of the selective grading done by experienced shrimp breeders, there are many grades of red cherry shrimp. The higher the grade, the more red the shrimp is. Here are some of the grades of red cherry shrimp:

- **Normal Cherry Shrimp:** Not that red. Has lots of transparent patches throughout the body
- **Sakura Cherry Shrimp:** Redder than the previous grade. The patches are lot less in the Sakura grade

- **Fire Red Shrimp:** Almost full body red. Almost no transparent patches. Hard to find in the shops.
- **Painted Fire Red Shrimp:** Very rare. It has a completely solid red body that looks like someone has painted red color over their body.
- **Bloody Mary Shrimp:** They are red as blood, hence the name Bloody Mary. Very rare and mostly available to experienced shrimp breeders only

Size



Cherry shrimps generally get about 1.5 inches long. The females are considerably larger than the males as they have to carry eggs inside their belly. Also, the females have a stronger red coloration compared to the males (considering both the same grade).

Also, when sexually matured, the females develop a saddle in their bodies. The saddle clearly distinguishes the females from the males. The saddle can be whitish or orangish in color. It holds the eggs before they get fertilized.

For a more in-depth discussion on cherry shrimp size, [click here](#) to read my guide.

Cherry Shrimp Behavior

- Cherry shrimps are extremely peaceful. They don't mind other tank mates in the tank. They simply go by doing their business.

- Unlike many fish species, cherry shrimps are social. They don't do well living alone. That's why it is always recommended to start with a colony of at least 10 cherry shrimps.
- Cherry shrimps are scavengers. They scavenge the substrate, leaves and other surfaces throughout the whole day.
- Cherry shrimps love algae and biofilm. That's why you can often see them grazing throughout the tank.
- Cherry shrimps are generally very active whether it is day or night.

Cherry Shrimp Requirements

In this section, I am briefly describing the requirements of the cherry shrimps. In the rest of the article, I will expand upon these requirements and explain them in details:

Clean Water: The first thing cherry shrimps need to live healthy is clean water. They require the water parameters in a specific range which is ideal for them. I'll explain these ranges later on. Also, cherry shrimps need a good filtration system in their tank.

Feeding: Cherry shrimps are not choosy on what they eat. They mainly live on algae and biofilm, both of which grow naturally in the aquarium. However, they don't eat all types of algae. If your tank is infested with hair or thread algae, don't expect your cherry shrimps to clean them off.

Along with algae and biofilm, cherry shrimps need other minerals and nutrients for a healthy life. You can provide these by offering a good commercial shrimp food. A good shrimp food is necessary for ensuring all the nutrients to the shrimps.

Tank Mates: Cherry shrimps generally don't do well with other tank mates. As they are very small in size, most tank mates will hunt them down all the time. In fact, a group of tetra can also be a terror to the baby cherry shrimps.

That's why I always recommend to keep your cherry shrimps in a shrimp only tank. However, if you definitely need to have tank mates, research well before buying any.

Cherry shrimps are not suitable for most of the aquarium fishes. Later on, I'll show a table illustrating the good and bad tank mates of cherry shrimp.

These 3 are the major requirements for cherry shrimp.

Are Cherry Shrimps Hard To Keep?

No, I don't think so. Even, I believe cherry shrimps are one of the easiest shrimp species to take care of. All you need to do is ensure a couple of their requirements and you'll be done.

The major 3 requirements of cherry shrimp are food, water parameters, and stress-free environment. If you can ensure these, they will live happily with themselves their whole lives in the tank.

Cherry Shrimp Habitat

As I have already mentioned before, cherry shrimps were originally from Taiwan. Their natural habitat is among ponds and streams, where there is a heavy plantation and rocky or sandy bottom.

So, in our home, we'll have to replicate such an environment for the cherry shrimps. We'll have to ensure the tank is filled with natural plants and moss. Plants and moss are not a luxury, but a necessity for the cherry shrimps. Click here to read my guide on the [best plants for cherry shrimp](#).

Moss and Plants

Moss and plants are a must for cherry shrimps. Here are the reasons why:

- Cherry shrimps love to graze on algae and biofilm. Biofilm grows on the surface of the leaves. Cherry shrimps love plants for these biofilms.
- They love hiding places. As cherry shrimps are very small, they are often hunted down in the wild. That's why they prefer a habitat where there are lots of hiding places. Plants and moss are great for this purpose.
- The complex root system of some plants and moss is great for trapping floating food particles. Cherry shrimps love to graze on these food particles all day long.
- Plants and moss keep the water quality pristine and clean. They also help to oxygenate the water. Both of these are crucial for cherry shrimps.

Substrate

Cherry shrimps require an inert substrate in their tank. By inert, I mean that the substrate won't change the pH level or lower it down. It will keep a stable pH value of around 6.8.

I love [pool filter sand](#) for cherry shrimp tank substrate. They are cheap and awesome. Some other options can be crushed lava rock, blasting sand, [eco-complete planted aquarium substrate](#), etc.

Note: One thing I would like to add here is, make sure the substrate is dark in color. Cherry shrimps can camouflage so they are hard to spot. If the substrate is light in color, the shrimps will not show deep coloration to make themselves hard to spot. So, by getting a dark-colored substrate, you can encourage the shrimps to show their true potential color.

Filtration

Cherry shrimps need a good filtration in their habitat. The good thing is, you won't have to spend a fortune on filtration.

For a moderately stocked shrimp tank, a sponge filter will do a fine job. Make sure there is an airstone to oxygenate the water. The sponges of the sponge filter are great for growing biofilms and accumulating food particles. These become a great source of food for the cherry shrimps. For the sponge filter, I'll recommend the one from Powkoo. It is large, the sponges are big and perfect for a shrimp tank. [Click here to check out the latest price on Amazon.](#)

For a big and heavily stocked shrimp tank, I'll recommend getting a powerful Hang On Back filter. They are not as powerful or expensive like canister filter, but can handle a heavy stocked shrimp-only tank well.

If you want to have a Hang On Back filter in the shrimp tank, make sure that the inlets of the filter are covered with a layer of filter media. This will ensure the shrimplets don't get sucked into the filter.

If you are looking for a Hang On Back filter, you can check out the Penguin model from MarineLand. This single HOB filter can handle up to 70 gallons of water. [Click here to check out the latest price on Amazon.](#)

In this article, I have discussed more about [filtration for cherry shrimps](#).

Water Parameters

These are the ideal ranges of water parameters for cherry shrimp:

These 5 water parameters are very important for the cherry shrimps.

Temperature:

Temperature is crucial for cherry shrimps. In fact, almost everything of cherry shrimps including the sex of the offspring is depended on the temperature. The ideal temperature range for cherry shrimps is 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you are looking for a reliable thermometer for the tank, check out [this one](#). I have been using it for years without facing any issue.

This table shows the effect of higher and lower temperature in cherry shrimp's life:

pH:

pH stands for Potential of Hydrogen. It measures how much acidic or alkaline the water is. The ideal range of pH for cherry shrimps is 6.5 to 7.5.

You can measure the pH of the shrimp tank water [with this](#).

GH and KH:

GH means General Hardness. It indicates the amount of dissolved calcium and magnesium ion in the water.

KH refers to Carbonate Hardness. It refers to the stability of the pH of the shrimp tank water.

With [this kit](#), you can measure both the GH and KH of the shrimp tank.

TDS:

TDS means Total Dissolved Solids. It measures how much dissolved molecules there are in the water, except for the H₂O molecules. A higher value of TDS simply indicates that the shrimp tank needs a water change.

Whenever my shrimp tank reads a higher TDS value, I perform a 20-30% water change. [This is a good TDS meter](#) which I've been using for almost a year now.

Size Of The Tank

There is no minimum size tank for cherry shrimps. Also, the size of the tank depends on the number of shrimps you want to keep. I'll recommend to start with at least a 5 gallon tank if your budget is short.

A good rule of thumb is to get 3 to 5 shrimps per gallon. Also, do keep in mind that cherry shrimps can breed very quickly and soon you'll find yourself with lots of baby cherry shrimps.

So, it is better to get a larger tank than you need.

Adding Red Cherry Shrimp To The Tank

Here are the step by step procedures you need to follow when adding red cherry shrimp to the tank:

- Before even adding the shrimps to the tank, you'll need to test the water and check if the parameters are in the right range. I know red cherry shrimps are comparatively harder than other shrimp species. But they are not immune to bad water quality. So, get a very good water test kit like the [API water test kit](#) and check the water. If all the parameters are in the range mentioned above, then think about adding red cherry shrimps to the tank.
- The fish shop should provide you the shrimps in a large water bag. After arriving home, get a big bowl and dump the water with the shrimps there. We need to drift acclimate the red cherry shrimps before introducing them to the tank.
- Now we need to make a siphon with a rubber band and air tube. Using the rubber band and the air tube, you'll need to create a siphon that sucks water from the aquarium. The other end of the siphon will face the bowl so that water from the aquarium goes straight to the bowl. The most important thing is, the water should fall only at the speed of 1 drop per second. This will slowly acclimate the shrimps with the new water parameters. To control

the speed of the water fall, try making a knot in the air tube and see if it reaches the desired speed.

- Continue to drip acclimate the shrimps for about half an hour. After that period, get a fishing net and slowly transfer the cherry shrimps from the bowl to their new home. Remember cherry shrimps can jump. So, while transferring, place on hand over the net as a cautionary practice.

This is actually how you should add cherry shrimps to the tank. After adding so, closely observe the shrimps for a couple of days. Normally if everything is okay, the cherry shrimps should be active, grazing on leaves and jumping around the tank.

However, if the shrimps don't seem to be active, try to reach the surface of the water level or float in the water, remember that these are the early signs indicating something is wrong with the tank.

If you observe any of these signs, immediately perform water test and check what has gone wrong. Also, perform a partial water change which might solve any minor problem with the water.

Cherry Shrimp Feeding

Feeding cherry shrimps is easy. They don't want much. Cherry shrimps mainly require 3 types of food:

1. **Algae and Biofilm** (this is the staple food for cherry shrimps)
2. **Commercial Shrimp Food** (This is to ensure all the minerals and nutrients to the shrimps)
3. **Blanched Vegetable** (Brings a nice & healthy change to the diet)

If you want to know [when to feed cherry shrimps](#), click here to read my detailed guide on it. Now, Let's talk about each of them in details:

Algae and Biofilm



You don't have to spend any money for algae and biofilm. They grow naturally in the tank. Also, algae and biofilm are the primary source of food for cherry shrimps. So, you actually need to spend next to nothing for feeding cherry shrimps.

One thing I would like to add here, cherry shrimps don't eat all types of algae. So, if your tank is infested with hair algae or thread algae, don't expect the cherry shrimps to clean them up. cherry shrimps only prefer soft algae.

Biofilm is the slimy green stuff that grows over the surface of glass, leaves, driftwood, etc. Shrimps love to graze them all day long.

Tip: When cleaning the shrimp tank, leave one or two sides of the glass unscratched so they have enough biofilm to support the shrimp colony.

Adding cholla wood and Indian almond leaves will also be an excellent thing for cherry shrimps. Indian Almond Leaves are loved by cherry shrimps. These leaves are perfect for growing biofilm and soft algae. Also, they help to keep the water parameters in the ideal range for the cherry shrimps.

Cholla wood has lots of holes and crannies throughout its body. Shrimps love to hide within cholla wood. It is an excellent hiding place for baby shrimps too.

Commercial Shrimp Food

Though cherry shrimps mainly live on algae and biofilm, these don't provide all the required minerals, vitamin and nutrients to the shrimps. So, you'll need to give something extra to provide all these.

And the solution is a good commercial shrimp food.

These foods contain almost everything a shrimp will need for proper growth. There are lots of options in the market. However, I like [Bacter AE](#) the most.

Bacter AE is a complete solution to shrimp's nutrition needs. The food particles are tiny as dust, so even the baby shrimps can eat them easily. Also, as the food is like dust particles, when dumped into the tank, they spread all over.

Shrimps are scavengers by nature. They scavenge through the whole tank and graze on these food particles all day long.

I know Bacter AE can be a bit expensive compared to some of the other food brands, but it is definitely worth the money. If you want another option, I'll suggest [Sinking Pellets from Aquatic Arts](#). Both are excellent options for cherry shrimp diet.

Blanched Vegetable

Sometimes cherry shrimp prefer a change in their diet. And nothing can be better than blanched vegetables for this purpose. Just take a piece of any vegetable lying around the house and blanch it until softens. Then leave the piece in the shrimp tank.

I'll suggest to place the vegetable piece on a food bowl and then put the bowl inside the tank. This will ensure the food particles don't go all over the tank and make the water quality poor.

Also, after about 10-15 minutes, take out the vegetable piece and through it out. This will ensure the vegetable doesn't deteriorate over time and lower the water quality.

Some of the good vegetable choices can be:

- Zucchini
- Lettuce
- Carrot
- Spinach
- Cucumber, etc.

Cherry Shrimp Tank Mates

Cherry shrimps generally don't do well with other tank mates. As they are very small in size, almost all other fishes try to hunt them down or nib at them. As a result, the shrimps always stay stressed. This affects their lifespan and the quality of offsprings.

So, if you ask me, I'll always recommend a shrimp only tank. For other tank mates, snails can be a pretty good option. Snails and cherry shrimps generally really go well together.

If you must need to have other fishes as tank mate, do the proper research beforehand. There are only a handful of fishes that can be kept with cherry shrimps.

If you choose the wrong one, your whole shrimp colony will be at risk. You can know more about [cherry shrimp and their tank mates](#) in this guide of mine.

Here is a chart that shows the good and bad tank mates for cherry shrimp:

As you can see from the chart, most of the fishes are not suitable for living with cherry shrimps. Even the small tetras and rasboras can still be a bully to baby cherry shrimps.

So, if you are planning on getting tank mates for your cherry shrimp, I'll recommend you to be prepared for the worst case. Personally, I never keep my cherry shrimps with any other fishes.

Can Cherry Shrimp Be Kept Together?

Yes, of course! Cherry shrimps are social and they love to live in a colony. In fact, cherry shrimps don't do well alone. It is always recommended to start your shrimp keeping journey with a colony of at least 10 cherry shrimps. This will ensure the colony has a good ratio of male and female cherry shrimps for future breeding.

Cherry Shrimp Molting



Molting is extremely important for red cherry shrimps. It is the process through which they grow. In simple terms, molting simply means removing the old exoskeleton and growing a new one.

During the molting stage, the cherry shrimps become extremely vulnerable. As they are growing a new exoskeleton, at this stage, they need special care. Otherwise, the shrimp can face many [molting problems](#).

Make sure the shrimps are getting proper diet that ensures all of the nutrients. Nothing should bother the shrimps at this stage so that they don't remain stressed. Stress is very serious for shrimps, especially during the molting stage, it can kill them too.

- Once the cherry shrimps have shed the old exoskeleton, don't pick it out. Leave the old exoskeleton in the tank as it is a very good source of nutrients for the cherry shrimps.
- Cherry shrimps are very sensitive to copper. Only a little amount of it in the water can disrupt the lives of cherry shrimps. So, make sure you add nothing in the tank that contains copper. Remember that there are lots of medications these days that contain copper. You need to be aware of these medications and keep them out from your cherry shrimp tank.

Cherry Shrimp Breeding

It is extremely easy to breed cherry shrimps. In fact, they are one of the easiest species to breed in aquarium. If you do all of the things mentioned above and take proper care of them, they will breed naturally. There is nothing special to do from your part for starting the breeding process.

The breeding process of cherry shrimps can be broken down into three separate stages:

- Pre-breeding
- Breeding
- Hatching

Let's talk about each of the stages in details:

Pre-Breeding

The pre-breeding stage is all about preparing the tank and setting the right environment so the shrimps start to breed. You can do this by ensuring the following things:

- The tank needs to be heavily planted and filled with lots of moss. Shrimps feel safe among plants as it goes with their natural habitat in the wild. So, keep enough plants in the tank.
- Feed your shrimps regularly. Ensure a protein-rich food. If you are feeding Bacter AE, there is nothing you need to worry about.
- The temperature is crucial for cherry shrimps. It needs to be in the right range. Not only breeding, temperature controls almost every aspect of a cherry shrimp's life. Below I am sticking a table that illustrates how temperature affects everything.
- When you have done all this and the shrimps get sexually matured (about 5 to 6 months old), they should start the breeding process naturally. It generally takes up to 4-5 months.

Breeding

Once the shrimps breed, it will be obvious. The females will be filled with eggs under their tails. At this stage, the females are called berries as they are carrying the eggs. The females use their tails to fan the eggs, which keep them fresh and ready. The eggs take about a month for hatching.

Hatching

After hatching, your tank will get filled with baby shrimps. The baby shrimps are exact identical to the adult shrimps. The only difference is they are small in size.

- Make sure the baby shrimps are in a matured tank. A new tank will not develop the microorganisms a baby shrimp needs to feed on.
- During the first few days, the babies will not come out much and hide themselves within the plants. It is completely natural. That's why the tank needs lots of plants. Also, the leaves and complex root structure of the plants are perfect for accumulating food particles. The babies love to graze on these food particles.

- One interesting thing is, once the babies are hatched, the adults don't care about them. The babies are on their own from the moment they hatch.

The Problem With Planted Tank \$ Cherry Shrimp

From all this discussion until now, you may think that a planted tank setup is perfect for cherry shrimps. Well, it is true. Planted Tank setups are ideal for these little creatures. However, there is a problem too.

Enthusiast planted tank owners inject carbon dioxide in the tank for the plants to flourish. Plants absorb this carbon dioxide and produce oxygen through the process of photosynthesis.

The thing is, photosynthesis can only be done when there is daylight, or in a planted tank, under the presence of light. But what happens when the light is turned off and somehow, the carbon dioxide is still running?

The excess carbon dioxide forms carbonic acid with the water. This carbonic acid destroys the stability of the pH in the water and can cause it to swing drastically between day and night. Though cherry shrimps are pretty hardy, even they might not handle such sharp pH transition or the increase of carbon dioxide.

Maybe you are thinking all I have to do is turn off the carbon dioxide when the light goes out. Well, that's true. But I have heard many horror stories that the owner somehow forgot to turn off the carbon dioxide pump or the light timer didn't work. Well, both of these incidents can bring a devastating result.

Conclusion

So, this is how you and everyone should take care of their cherry shrimps. Though cherry shrimps are pretty small and low-demanding, they deserve some special care and love from you. And if you can provide that, you'll be rewarded with hundreds of cherry shrimp babies.

I know a lot of things were covered in the guide. So, if you want to bookmark the page for studying later, you're welcome to do so. Also, I'll suggest you to download the printable short-version of the cherry shrimp care guide so that you are always ready for your cherry shrimps.

I hope your cherry shrimps remain happy and healthy as much as you do.

Happy Cherry Shrimp Keeping!