

## Frag Swaps – a beginner's guide.

Continued from page 1

Photo by Tony Nista



A selection of frags for buying or swapping.

making a purchase, as sometimes there will be large differences in the price of certain species. At one swap, for example, I saw two-inch fragments of blue *Acropora tortuosa* selling for \$30 from one gentleman and for \$100 from another. Remember that negotiating on prices is common practice, and you will sometimes even get a discount for buying multiple pieces from the same person.

### Selection and Care

You will typically find that a majority of the species being offered for sale or trade are the more common and easy to keep species. You should always research the care requirements before you acquire a species, though. Ask the seller what type of lighting and water flow the species has been maintained in and how quickly it grows. You will want to be sure that you can provide the proper environment.

Many times you will be tempted by the more difficult to keep species. These are invariably the brighter colored, more aesthetically pleasing corals that you will see at the swap. Be sure that you know all of the care

Photo by Tony Nista



The materials needed for safely getting your frags home.



All packed up and ready for the trip home o your systems.

requirements and that you are capable of maintaining the proper conditions for survival. There are few things worse than watching an \$80 frag slowly perish in your aquarium, except, perhaps, for explaining how much you paid for that dying "green stick" to your spouse!

### Packing your frags

Now that you have secured all of you purchases and trades, it is time for the trip home. I never assume that the seller will have appropriate packing materials, although many do, so I always bring my "frag swap road kit" which contains everything I need to get the corals home. First, you will need something to package the corals themselves. I like to use plastic fish bags or plastic, Tupperware-type containers. I also bring plenty of rubber bands, a towel, spare fish bags (in case of leaks), and finally, a good size beverage cooler or a

Photo by Tony Nista

Styrofoam box to hold all of the corals and keep the temperature stable. In extreme weather, you should also bring either ice packs or small heat packs to keep the temperature in the cooler at an acceptable level. You can get the heat packs at any department store or sporting good store. They are usually sold as disposable hand warmers in the hunting section for a few dollars.

Once you have your corals packed in their bags, place them in the cooler. If needed, the ice pack or heat pack should be wrapped in newspaper so it can't come in direct contact with the bags. Finally, use the towel or some newspaper to fill in the rest of the cooler to prevent the bags from being jostled around as you drive home.

When you arrive home, acclimate the corals as you normally would, ensuring that the temperature and pH are equalized between the bags and your aquarium. I recommend doing this with the aquarium lights off to reduce further stress on the corals. I like to wait two or three days before permanently mounting any newly acquired frags to ensure they are fully acclimated to my aquarium and to avoid further stress on the animals after all of the handling they went through the day of the swap.

### Next Swap

Well, that's it. You are now a frag swap veteran. When the next swap comes around, you should have some corals of your own to trade. Trading of captive grown corals not only makes the hobby more enjoyable and affordable, but also reduces the impact of collecting wild corals from the reef, captive grown corals have a much higher rate of survival and will almost always maintain their color better and grow faster than their wild caught counterparts.



Hobbyists checking out the selection at a local Frag Swap.

Photo by Tony Nista