

# Nano Reef Aquariums and the Advent of Coral Fragging

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It is undeniable that over the last few years a large number of advances have occurred in the Reef-Keeping hobby. Hobbyists who enjoy successful coral reef keeping have the ability to nurture and grow very delicate corals in their own home aquariums. Such corals include Acropora, Echinophyllia, Oxypora, Mycedium and other desirable species.

However, an especially important change is the advent of the ability to frag parts off a larger mother coral colony and use those small coral parts, to attract a large number of aspiring hobbyists into setting up "Nano-Reefs". Many of these individuals had an interest in setting up a reef aquarium in the past but were initially unable or unwilling to make the start-up decision due to the high cost of stocking a reef tank. Fragging has changed this experience.

To clarify, Coral Fragging involves acquiring a fairly large coral specimen, using various techniques to sever off small fragments of the large mother coral, glueing them to a "plug" which is made of limestone, or another suitable material, & distributing those coral frags to hobbyists for regrowth into coral reefs.

Why is fragging such an important development? Very simply, because all those who decided against entering the hobby, due to monetary reasons, are now able to acquire even the most desirable corals at a fraction of what they used to cost, prior to the availability of coral frags. Could this simple change make so

large a difference and convince so many that they could now justify setting up a marine coral reef tank? Indeed.

To use just one example, a mother Echinopora coral of a decent size was retailing for upwards of as much as \$1,000 (£ 675.00) before fragging came about. A frag of the same coral can now be purchased for less than \$100.00 (£ 67.50). All types of corals across the board have been affected. Acropora species corals, for instance, were selling for prices upwards of several hundreds of dollars whereas frags of even this ultra special species can now be purchased for less than \$100.00 (£ 67.50) and even less for the more common varieties.

Besides the large reduction in the cost of stocking one's reef, another change that convinced so many newbies to join the hobby is the appearance of the Nano-Reef concept. Not only is reef life now much more affordable, but all the equipment needed to set up a Nano-Reef is also far less costly than before.

After the rise of the Frags & Nano-Reef Aquariums, tanks ranging from 10 ~ 30 gallons have seen a large growth in sales. This has been confirmed not only by an increase in reef aquarium hobbyist clubs, but also by an increase in new marine pet stores and their change in their product inventory stock. In essence, Fragging and Nano-Reefs have helped the pet store industry as well.

In addition, Fragging and Nano-Reefs contribute to reducing the hobby's

impact on the environment, as far fewer of the fraggable corals are now being collected from the reefs. The impact may still not be as significant as possible, but fragging is starting to make a difference and will continue to do so as more fragging occurs worldwide.

Fragging has evolved to the point where hobbyists themselves are now not only making cuttings of delicate corals but also of other Nano-Reef life forms, including the many species of Corallimorpharia (Mushrooms species of the Discosoma and Rhodactis types).

As this trend continues (and there is no reason why it will not), more and more individuals will be attracted to the marine reef hobby. Nano-Reef Keeping will become particularly popular, given that the entrance cost to the reef hobby has decreased so much, and the variety of Nano-Reef inhabitants has also inversely increased so much. This is all thanks to the increasing number of marine life forms that are successfully being fragged everyday. --- (contd.)

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