

Pocillopora damicornis is one of the most frequently kept *Pocillopora* corals because it is widely available, abundant and not in any way threatened. Often referred to in research papers as the “guinea pig” coral, this is one of the most studied by biologists, and has led to a far better understanding of corals, coral reefs and coral reproduction and growth.

In Nano-Reefs of 20 gallons (or more), they will do best in bright, but not necessarily intense lighting. They can adapt to moderate lighting as well, as long as the changeover is performed slowly. Of course, light changes should be practiced gradually for the benefit of all your aquarium inhabitants, not solely this coral. New studies have shown that providing a long photoperiod and duration of oxygen saturation of the water in the Nano-Reef are quite important, as well.

P. damicornis requires strong water flow. Depending on how the flow actually occurs on the coral, its shape may change from thin branches spread far apart to a thicker and denser growth. Like many SPS corals, the shape of the *P. damicornis* is affected by both water conditions and by its location in the Nano-Reef. Two different species can look quite similar in deeper waters, and yet they can also develop different forms in shallower areas.

The polyps of the *Pocillopora* genus are embedded within their skeletal structure. If any external or surrounding movement is detected, the polyps retract completely and instantly. Their polyps are small and fuzzy and very visually striking with a two-tone color. *Pocillopora damicornis* is found in nature with brown, green, pink, purple, cream, and a combination of green and yellow, brown and pink. However, a variety of other color combinations have been aquacultured. Such corals will have acquired names related to their color. Green *Damicornis*, Pink and Green, Pink Peony, and Cadmium *Pocillopora* Coral are a few examples.

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Pocillopora damicornis is easy to care for, but it can be sensitive, especially to temperature changes, inefficient water flow (e.g. laminar flow as opposed to non-uniform flow), and also stress from being moved inside the Nano-Reef, and of course from shipping or transportation. This sensitivity is actually surprising because they inhabit all types of environments in the wild, even areas of quite 'dirty and turbid' water.

Moving any coral from one area in the aquarium to another can cause it a great amount of stress. If a move is necessary, handle the move slowly and gradually to prevent sudden major changes that may impact the coral in a negative way. The stress occurs due to the fact that the lighting and water conditions in the 'new' location will be different than the prior location, and the *Pocillopora* has to slowly adapt to those new conditions. Fortunately, once they are established, they are considered as quite hardy reef corals.

Pocillopora Coral

for the Nano Reef Aquarium

Aquarium water temperature plays a big role in growth speed. They reproduce both sexually and asexually through fragmentation. They have short one inch sweeper tentacles that can affect nearby corals if they are in touching range. Thus, corals should be strategically placed in a position where they cannot be the enemy or the victim to other corals. Many corals, especially LPS corals, have long sweeper tentacles to be weary of.

In a Nano-Reef, the *Pocillopora* corals will do best in a well-fed reef with plenty of dissolved solids and zoo-plankton fed once or twice a week. Reefkeepers should exercise more caution when feeding large amounts of such foods because water quality will decrease as nutrient levels rise quickly when such foods are used. Deterioration of water quality and the appearance of GHA's are both possible. Smaller forms of foods are still being developed, such as invert larvae and even new types of rotifers, which is a good food choice for them as well. Lack of food would cause no coral growth, and no polyp extension and in some cases even tissue recession.

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