

Oulophyllia Coral - Moon, Moonstone Coral

Oulophyllia, although available in the hobby trade, is quite often mislabeled due to its resemblance to other types of Brain corals and may therefore not be offered for sale under its proper name. Due to its overall difference in shape, identification should not be difficult. But because it is not widely available, one many wholesalers and stores may not research its correct ID and just sell it as a Brain Coral without giving it the correct scientific name.

It is a large polyp coral (LPS) that comes in a number of colors, but often in green. You may encounter blue and even red ones, although the entire coral may not show just that one color. Often there will be a mix of colors especially around the "mouth" openings, although that differently colored area may not be very large.

It is a photosynthetic coral and derives nutrition from its symbiotic algae, but depending on its major color, some may not do best when exposed to too much light and supplemental feeding is then necessary. The Green colored corals can be placed in stronger light but other colored ones prefer a lower light intensity.



Figure 1: Oulophyllia © Pacific Aqua Farms

Although this is a slow growing coral, you can somewhat speed up its growth by feeding it very regularly. Most hobbyists who own one of these corals feed them everyday by "spot feeding". In feeding mode, the coral shows a great short meaty polyp extension (Fig. 2). All you need to do is place food on it and it will exhibit its voracious feeding behavior quickly.

All should get a somewhat turbulent water flow to keep the polyp clean of detritus, so that whatever falls on it, or settles on it, is removed and cannot decompose. Otherwise, the polyp tissue would get damaged and lead to necrosis and possibly bacterial infection and even loss of the entire coral. Bacterial and similar infections are difficult to treat, and even when the treatment is successful, the coral may have suffered too much tissue loss, making it look far less attractive than normal. This water flow should also be just enough to keep a good, gentle stream of food particles for it to trap.

This is a great and beautiful coral, making it an above average price as you have probably surmised, but not necessarily expensive either. The Moonstone Coral is also not for the beginner, but anyone with a well aged aquarium and with knowledge of reef water chemistry, feeding and spot feeding, and with a willingness to care for and feed this coral everyday, can be the proud owner of an Oulophyllia species coral.

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