

# Care Sheet: Green Geckos



## North Island (*Naultinus grayii*; *N. elegans*; *N. punctatus*)

- Adult Size: up to 95mm SVL.
- Threat status: 'At Risk – Declining'.
- Lifespan: around 20 years (up to 50).
- Habitat: Lowland forest and scrub, often found associated with Manuka / Kanuka in scrubby or swampy areas.
- Permit Level: General authorisation.

## South Island (*Naultinus manukanus*; *N. rudis*; *N. stellatus*; *N. tuberculatus*; *N. gemmeus*)

- Adult Size: up to 82mm SVL.
- Threat status: 'At Risk – Declining' to 'Threatened – Nationally vulnerable'.
- Lifespan: around 20 years (up to 50).
- Habitat: Lowland forest and scrub, often found associated with Manuka / Kanuka in scrubby or swampy areas.
- Permit Level: Insurance population species.

### **Enclosure:**

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 50x50x100cm (LxWxH).

### **Ideal Group Size:**

1:2 (M:F).

*\*Can also include offspring for their first year, though many keepers prefer to raise them separately.*

### **Compatible Species:**

Forest Geckos, Pacific Geckos, *Woodworthia* spp. Geckos, Goldstripe Geckos, Small diurnal skinks, Copper, Ornate and Whitaker's Skinks. Green geckos should not be held with other species of green gecko as all species will readily hybridise.

### **Recommended Cage Furnishing:**

Green geckos are relatively easy to keep and breed in captivity. Like most native geckos they require a decent sized enclosure. The enclosure should be decorated with live plants, logs, branches, other hiding places and a thick layer of leaf litter as a substrate on the floor. Since these geckos are arboreal (tree dwelling), a taller rather than wider cage is preferred. In the wild, green geckos show a preference for

plants with dense foliage that they can take refuge in, so when furnishing enclosures select species that provide this feature. Plants such as *Coprosma* and *Pittosporum* varieties are easily grown in pots positioned in the enclosure and provide good dense 3D structures on which these geckos like to climb. In addition to plants which provide structure, it is important to provide these geckos with appropriate refuge sites. Green geckos are known to use hollow bamboo and polythene pipe in captivity, these should be suspended on a branch or against the mesh near the top of the enclosure for them to be best-utilised. One plant which has proved very hardy in enclosures and is well-utilised as a retreat / refuge by green geckos is Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*).

### **Breeding:**

For North Island species mating generally occurs in spring, and two young (rarely one) are born between April and October. South Island species are generally born over summer and autumn. Species held outside of their natural range may mate and birth at uncharacteristic times. Young geckos are often removed and placed in a smaller “baby cage” where they are fed on vinegar / fruit flies (*Drosophila*) and small house flies. Once they have grown in size (usually after a year) they can be returned to a larger “adult” enclosure.

### **Diet:**

Green Geckos are primarily insectivorous (insect eating) and are most commonly fed live insects such as flies, moths, small beetles, spiders, crickets and grasshoppers. These insects can be wild caught or captive-bred although reptile vitamin supplements will need to be added to captive-bred insects. These geckos will also lick sweet nectar and honeydew in the wild, and are very fond of sweet fruit mixtures (fruit puree, mashed banana) and diluted honey in captivity. The more food a gecko eats the faster it will grow, and the faster they grow the more frequently they will need to slough their skin. Therefore, geckos may slough a few times over the warm summer months when they are eating regularly, but may only slough once during the winter, if at all.

### **Notes:**

- If these species are threatened, they may ‘mouth gape’ and vocalise with short croaks and barks.
- Bright canary yellow forms of these species sometimes occur, though rare in wild populations there are a high proportion of yellow elegant geckos in captivity, these forms probably have a defective gene coding for blue pigment in their skin. Yellow Northland green geckos are occasionally born in captivity, although these generally revert to green colouration within their first couple of years.
- Green geckos (particularly males) can be notoriously aggressive towards conspecifics, so care should be taken to observe social interactions in captivity and remove aggressive individuals.



*Left: Example set-up for Green Geckos utilising a potted Pittosporum with dense foliage, Spanish Moss (a favoured refuge site) and a network of branches for climbing / basking.*



*Right: A group of Naultinus grayii basking in the foliage of a potted Kowhai (Sophora sp.)*