



Habitat checklist - for one tortoise

Submit an Adoption Application at
www.tortoisegroup.org

Yard

- The recommended minimum area for the tortoise is 600 square feet (for example, 30' x 20').
- Some areas of shade and some of full sun.
- Area must be fenced. Most people have block walls. Chain link and wrought iron must be faced with something 18" high that the tortoise cannot see through.
- One-foot clear space around edge of the habitat for tortoise to walk.

Burrow (*the most important feature of the habitat*)

- Drainage from roof and yard must not enter burrow.
- Burrow is at least 5' from walls, sidewalks, and plants on all sides.
- Burrow is located in a completely dry area at least 15' x 15'. This can be an aboveground or underground burrow.
- Burrow opening does not face east, north or west (to avoid the hot summer sun).
- Orient the burrow so that, when the tortoise extends the channel, it will not go into a wet area, the neighbor's yard, or under your house.

In the booklet [Desert Tortoises Adoption & Care](#), see how to build an underground burrow (pp 9-14), aboveground burrow (p 15) and a hatchling burrow (p 23-24). There are two examples of aboveground burrows.

Water

- Build a water dish (p. 16 of the [Adoption & Care](#) booklet).
On our website, check '[Creating a Tortoise Habitat](#).'

Hazards

- Tortoises can easily climb stacked Windsor blocks.
- Check yard equipment, firewood, toys, etc. A tortoise can crawl under or climb up on items and tip over or get stuck.
- This can easily lead to death.
- Modify steps and other drop-offs.
- Fence an open pool or pond.
- Frisky, untrainable dogs can harm or kill a tortoise.
- Block or cover open fences (like chain link). A tortoise can stick an arm in and hurt the arm or nail.
- Do not use pelletized fertilizer.
- Watch for openings where a tortoise might become stuck and die in the heat.
- Pick up litter.

Plants

- Put in a variety of [plants from our list](#) for the tortoise to browse.
- Establish a 3' x 3' patch of grass that will be kept short.

Gate Barrier & Locking Gate

- Install a [Removable Gate Barrier](#).
Look for examples online in '[Creating a Tortoise Habitat](#).'