



# GREEN IGUANAS in Florida

Green iguanas have been a fad pet for years. Unfortunately, many escaped or were abandoned after becoming too large or expensive to care for. There are now thousands of the green lizards throughout south Florida.

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- Green iguanas can grow to six feet in length and live for more than 15 years.
  - Iguanas are excellent swimmers.
  - Iguanas communicate through head bobs and other body language.
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Although most people find these animals fascinating, iguanas do sometimes create challenges for Florida residents. The most frequent complaint is that they eat ornamental plants, such as orchids or hibiscus. Iguanas can also cause problems when they dig holes for nesting. But iguanas are not known to pose a threat to native wildlife (iguanas are primarily herbivorous) and they normally avoid people—although iguanas will defend themselves when cornered.

Green iguanas are not native to the United States, but they have thrived in Florida for many years and are most likely here to stay.



# LEAPIN' LIZARDS!

Although Green iguanas—as with all wildlife—can sometimes pose unwelcome challenges, there are humane methods of discouraging iguanas from becoming “nuisances.”

- Do not feed iguanas. Feeding only encourages animals to stick around.
- Make your property less iguana-friendly by planting landscaping that iguanas will not eat such as citrus, crotons or any tough, thick leaved plant. Plants can also be protected using chicken wire.
- Iguana Repellent. You may have luck with a spray mixture—made from blended garlic cloves and hot peppers—that deters iguanas from eating plants.

**Trapping.** In Florida it is illegal to trap and then relocate iguanas. Trappers hired to “solve” a problem involving iguanas almost always will kill the animals. Trappers often use cruel snares to capture iguanas.

## You Can Help

- Never buy an iguana from a pet store. Instead, adopt one from a herpetological society or wildlife rescue group. *Note:* Iguanas are not easy to care for. They require a very specific environment and diet.
- Today, iguanas can be purchased for as little as \$10, making them popular impulse purchases at pet stores. Captive iguanas often do not receive proper care and die shortly after their purchase. Others are irresponsibly released into the wild. The pet industry is ultimately responsible for the large numbers of iguanas in Florida. Contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and urge them to take steps to ban or restrict the sale of iguanas in Florida. Contact the FWC through their website: [www.MyFWC.com/Contact](http://www.MyFWC.com/Contact)
- Support ARFF. One of ARFF’s legislative priorities is enactment of a ban on the breeding, sale and private possession of dangerous exotic animals—to protect people, animals and the environment.