Basic Reptile Care

- Adequate space and ventilation
- Clean, safe substrate and clean water
- Quality UV lighting (not needed for snakes)
- Vitamin and mineral supplements

Snakes

- Secure lid latches/clips prevent escape.
- Appropriate environment—each species has its own requirements. Most of the species recommended here can be kept at room temperature, but their enclosures should provide cooler and warmer spots. Adequate humidity is also important for some species
- Dietary requirements vary depending on the snake species, but most can be fed thawed, pre-killed rodents.

Lizards

- Basking areas or perches (with heat/UV source) are needed for some species.
- Dietary requirements vary greatly among species, depending on whether they are herbivores, omnivores, insectivores, or carnivores. It is important to offer a wide variety of food.

Tortoises/Aquatic Turtles

- Adequate space and shelter are essential for tortoise enclosures.
- Aquatic turtles need clean water.
- Appropriate environment is critical; pay close attention to temperature and humidity to prevent respiratory infections and other illnesses!
- Dietary and UV lighting needs should ***not*** be underestimated. Tortoises require a variety of fresh, nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables, not just lettuce!

Make sure your pet reptile is captive born and bred.* This will:

- Ensure that your pet was not removed from a wild population (including eggs).
- Ensure that your pet will not have a lot of parasites in or on its body.

*Ask the breeder or pet shop questions about where and how the animal was bred.

Learn your local captive wildlife laws!

Many states have laws dealing with wild and captive (native and non-native) reptiles. These laws range from space and permit requirements to prohibited species—some states don't even allow reptiles to be kept as pets! To learn more about your local laws regarding captive wildlife, visit:
www.fishwildlife.org/where_us.html

It is NEVER legal to release non-native wildlife!

For more information about captive care of your pet reptile, see these online resources:

- Melissa Kaplan's Herp Care Collection
  www.anapsid.org
- American Veterinary Medical Association
  www.avma.org
- World Chelonian Trust
  http://chelonia.org
- "What to Do with Unwanted Pet Amphibians and Reptiles"
  www.separc.org - under 'Products'

Buyers' Guide to Pet Reptiles

Southeastern PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

www.separc.org

Brochure developed by the 2010
SEPARC Invasive Animal Task Team

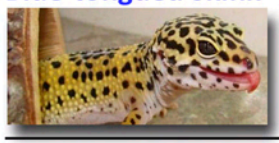
Buyers' Guide to Pet Reptiles

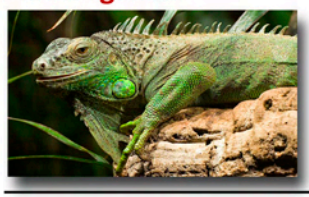
Cornsnake

When choosing a pet reptile, you should consider:

- How long will this animal live?
- How large will this animal grow?
- How much will it cost to feed and care for this animal?
- What are the long-term requirements for this animal?
- Where did this animal come from?
- Is this animal going to be a safe pet for my household?

Burmese Python

BEST Choices	Why are these good choices?
Cornsnake, Ratsnake, Milksnake, Kingsnake	These snakes are readily available through local breeders/pet shops and are usually captive bred. They generally have a good temperament and basic care requirements.
Ball Python	This species of python is very popular and readily available in a variety of color patterns. The Ball Python is probably the best pet python (especially for beginners) because of its smaller size and caging requirements. However, you should know that these snakes can live for 20-30 years.
Leopard Gecko, Bearded Dragon, Blue-tongued Skink 	These lizards are available through local breeders or pet shops and are all small to medium-sized species with good temperaments and basic care requirements. Leopard geckos are especially easy to care for because, unlike other lizards, they do not require UV lights.
Red-footed Tortoise, Yellow-footed Tortoise	These tortoises are readily available at pet stores, have great temperaments, and are among the best choices for a pet turtle. However, tortoises require a large enclosure, and all species need quality UV lighting and a nutritious diet including a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Be aware that these species can live for 25-60 years.

POOR Choices	Why are these poor choices?
Burmese, Reticulated, and African Pythons, Anacondas	Although they are readily available and are often inexpensive, these snakes can grow to over 20 feet long and can be dangerous. Many states will soon restrict or prohibit keeping these species as pets.
Most Monitor Lizards	Monitor lizards are often readily available but many species can be dangerous to handle. They also have extensive care requirements and need very large enclosures with quality UV lighting/exposure.
Green Iguana 	Iguanas are readily available and are inexpensive but grow quite large and become aggressive as adults—as a result, finding new homes for unwanted iguanas is nearly impossible. They are prone to health problems if not fed a nutritious, varied diet, and require large enclosures with UV lighting.
African Spurred Tortoise (aka Spur-Thigh or Sulcata Tortoise)	This species of tortoise is widely available at small sizes, but can grow to weigh over 200 pounds! Most turtles and tortoises do not make good pets, because they are very long-lived and require large enclosures.
Red-eared Slider Turtle	Although many states do not allow this turtle species to be kept as a pet, they are sometimes sold illegally. They require large enclosures with filtered water (or frequent water changes) and UV lighting.