

# Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula*)

## Care

---

### Inro:

These quirky little lizards are quite a rambunctious species. Native to Italy and surrounding areas, they love rocky, grassy Mediterranean environments.



Basking on rocks, scouring for food in the tall grass and seeking out refuge in rock crevices.

These little guys have also found their way and established themselves far from home. The New York City these guys escaped from a pet store in Garden City, NY on Long Island sometime in the 1960s. They quickly adapted to the concrete suburb jungle around them living in home gardens, stone walls and along the rocky gravel Long Island Railroad tracks in Garden City.

From there these guys have managed to spread either by reproduction or with help from humans moving them to their house and starting a population there. Since starting off in Garden City they have spread east to Hempstead, NY and pretty much all throughout Long Island and Queens.

They are also found in parts of Brooklyn, the Bronx and Central Park Manhattan. They are now reported to be spreading north along the Metro-North railroad track from Bronx up to southern Connecticut. The other population near by is in southern New Jersey. Just west of Philadelphia in a suburb neighborhood a young college student and amateur herpetologist had heard about the wall lizards in Long Island and unsatisfied with the lack of biodiversity in his parents' back yard he ordered from a dealer in the Bronx about 200 wall lizards that had been imported from Italy and released them in his yard sometime in the 1980s. They have since then taken over the neighborhood, but also the office/ municipal complex across the highway and another office complex a mile south. Although not as big of a range as the NY lizards, they are very dense and in high concentrations where they are. In addition to these spots wall lizards have become set up in Topeka KS, south-western MO and the LA area of California. A sister species *Podarcis muralis* from northern Europe is found in the states as well in Cincinnati OH and Vancouver Island. However, these babies are a product of either or a combination of the New York and New Jersey populations.

**Note:** The information in this is a result of experimenting around and trying different things as am always learning new tips with Wall Lizards. In addition, a huge amount is from learning and exchanging info with other keepers and researchers as well as reading research papers on these guys. So, I usually use the word generally or usually as animals do

not following strict guidelines and can vary individual too individual. For additional info I can be contacted at [livingstoncarl37@yahoo.com](mailto:livingstoncarl37@yahoo.com) or Russel Burke of Hofstra University

## Care

### Habitat/ Set Up

**Décor/ Furnishing:** These guys can and will squeeze themselves into any crack or crevice they can fit themselves into. Even if it looks like there's not way they could fit in there, you'd be surprised. They love basking on logs, rocks, bricks, ect. I usually stack one or two 3-4" thick cinderblocks of different sizes for them to bask and climb around on. Ill also place/stack the bricks with holes in the middle of them, put like a ½" spacer of wood between bricks or use a piece of flat rock such as slate on top of some bricks. Pieces of wood should also be used. Corkwood hollows are usually good as they like to hide and crawl inside tree stumps or rotting railroad ties in the wild. I also try to if there's room in the terrarium provide them with a rock pile of large 3-5" smooth aquarium stones. Provide them with a few fake plastic or real waxy type plants that will allow for water beads to form up on. As will be stressed later, these guys drink allot and need to be kept hydrated.

**Substrate:** Wall Lizards love to burrow. I have tried many different substrates on these guys and have found the best options are either paper towels or cypress mulch work best. I usually put my babies on paper towels till they're about 2" SVL (Snout Vent Length) then I move them. With the adults I put about 2-3" of substrate. They will burrow but not deep. They'll dig a little "burrow right under a rock or brick but won't go overall deep. Even the tunnels ive seen them use in Jersey are only about an inch or two below ground. You could also use substrate such as Zoo Meds repti-bark but it limits they're burrowing capabilities.

**Habitat Size:** The size generally should be the larger the better. They are very active and love to spread. I keep adults in a 48x13x24 aquarium & babies I will usually keep in a 10gal aquarium. Some height is usually good because they will climb up and down stone piles/ walls or branches. I've seen them as high up as 5ft in a tree. Some people keep them in 36x18x18 terrariums or if you live in a mild climate screen cages and keeping them outdoors is an option. They are not generally territorial and live in high densities as noted above so live together isn't an issue, you just may have to clean basking spots more often (They almost always only poop on the basking spot).

### Diet/ Climate

**Diet:** These guys are primarily insectivores but like most Lacertas are omnivorous. They'll feed great on crickets, mealworms, small superworms, ect. I've found babies can take fruit flies, XS/ Sm crickets and adults can take Med/small Lrg crickets. As far as non-insect food these guys love fruit. They'll eat mashed up peaches/ plums and stuff like chopped up lettuce/ prickly pear cactus. Canned food such as Zoo Meds "Tortoise & Omnivorous Lizard Food" works well or

box turtle foods. Mine haven't shown much interest but they have been known to eat soft cat/dog food.

**Temp/ Lighting:** Being from Europe and living in NYC/ South Jersey they can take it cool, however that doesn't mean you should. In the summer I keep mine with about an 85-90F basking spot and about 75-80F ambient temp. I provide my adults with two basking spot, one hot and one cool, and in the fall around late Sep-early/ mid Oct turn off the hot basking light and by Dec turn off the cool basking spot leaving only the UVB bulb. Warming them up I do the process backwards as to not shock them turning on the first light around march and the second around may. Since my terrarium is 24" tall I use a 10.0 UVB florescent bulb, not tube providing a UVB basking spot but tubes can be used. On my babies I use a 5.0 florescent tube and an 85F basking spot. In the winter I keep my adults at around 50-60F as a cooling period for breeding. I don't cool my babies and if you're not interested in breeding there is no need to cool them. Wall Lizards can definitely handle extremes both hot & cold. While they may not be active and have a cool place to retreat to they can handle up and a little above 100F. As far as cold goes, in experiments they were able to survive down to 23-24F before they started to die, however these temps are not recommended. At a minimum I would say about 40F is probably safe although not recommended for extended periods of times. While they may not remain active through the cooler periods I did see a male out and about in Feb on a 54F day in Queens foraging around.