



## Black Swordtail ( *Xiphophorus helleri* ) - Variety

Order: Cyprinodontiformes - Family: Poeciliidae



### Also known as:

**Type:** Tropical/ Brackish Water- Liverbearer

### Origin:

**Description:** Males have a long "sword" on the tail. These fish come in a variety of colours with many different fin styles. Some forms have been selectively bred to even have the sword extension not only on the bottom of the fin but the top also.

**Physical Characteristics:** The Black Swordtail is an attractive color variation of the wild type of *Xiphophorus helleri* which comes from stock originally found in Central America by Heckel in 1848. Due to selective breeding this fish has a nearly all black body, with transparent or colored fins. They have a peaceful community aquarium temperament, swim at mid range and enjoy planted and rocky aquariums with a tight fitting lid.

**Size:** 2" to 2.5" long 10.2-17.8cm (4-7 ")

**Color Form:** Multiple / Black

**Sexual dimorphism:** Males have a long "sword" on their tails. Females have a fan shaped anal fin and males have a stick shaped anal fin (gonopodium). Males are larger in length than females, up to 7" if you include the sword. Female Swordtails can be mistaken for Platys or even Mollys depending on colour.

**Lifespan:** 3-5 years

**Behavior:** Generally not a shoaling fish but do prefer to be in groups, males may chase each other

**Habitat:** Central America

**Diet:** Tropical flake food, freeze dried brine shrimp (supplement), freeze dried blood worms (supplement). A variety of foods accepted including pellets, flake, daphnia, frozen tubifex worms and brine shrimp. They also like to eat some blanched vegetables like courgette, cucumber or lettuce. Feed once or twice a day. Will allow hand feeding.

**Breeding:** Raising Black Swordtails is not a good idea unless you are willing to devote some time to reading up about Swordtails and how their pigmentation works. Simply crossing your fish in order to create completely black Swordtails with a really deep color can lead to disastrous results, because the black pigment in Black Swordtails is actually cancerous. Swordtails with completely black fins will normally develop a tumor that eventually kills the fish. It is therefore important for Swordtail breeders to keep the fins cleared or colored, never completely black. If you if you want to raise quality Black Sword tails you need to know the black pigmentation works. Simply crossing your Black Swordtails to create completely black swords will lead to disastrous effects because the black pigment in the tail is cancerous. Swordtails with completely black fin will develop tumors which will eventually kill the fish. The way to avoid this is to keep the fins clear or colored. Start with the best black female sword you can find that has clear fins. The male can be any variety as long as he has red or deep orange fins. The fry from this mating will be half black, the non- black swords will be the color of the male. From the black swords some will have red or orange fins these are known as Berlin Swords which are highly sought after. Newborn fish are large at birth and their development is very advanced. They can swim right away, which is needed to avoid enemies including their parents who give no natal care whatsoever. The fry grow very quickly and will accept newly hatched brine shrimp micro worms and finely crushed flake food.

**Aquarium Setup:** Well planted with open swimming spaces. Multiple hiding places are essential. Mid-swimming fish that are generally peaceful, but males can become aggressive with each other. Keep at least two females per male to keep the males from fighting. It is possible to keep an all male tank but you should have at least 4-5 and expect to have to watch for "bully" fish. Swordtails can hybridise with Platys, and if they are kept in a mixed tank male Swordtails will pursue female Platys and visa versa.

**Minimum School Size:** 1:2 M:F

**Minimum Tank Size:** 45.4 Liters (12 US G.)

**Care Level:** Easy

### Water Conditions:

- **Temperature:** 75 to 78 degrees F
- **pH:** pH 7.0 to 7.5
- **Hardness:** 10-15 °d

**Swimming Level:**

**Compatibility / Temperament:**

