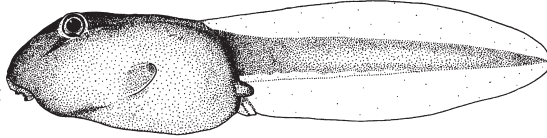


## Which Missouri species to select

The length of time from tadpole to a new frog depends on the type of frog, water temperature and size of tadpole collected. Therefore, if you want tadpoles that will complete metamorphosis within 6 to 12 weeks, it is best to select species based upon size. The following descriptions will allow you to judge what species you want to use based on the time of metamorphosis.

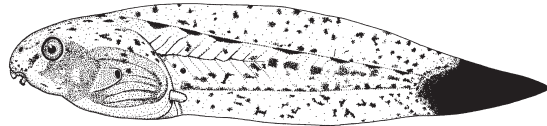
### American toad

A very small dark tadpole, less than 1 inch long, with eyes near the top of the head; transforms into a toadlet within 6 to 8 weeks. *See cover.*



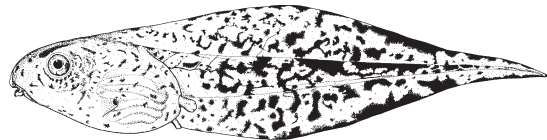
### Blanchard's cricket frog

Another small tadpole that transforms between 1 and 1 1/2 inches; easy to identify due to its black tipped tail; transforms within 5 to 10 weeks.



### Gray treefrog

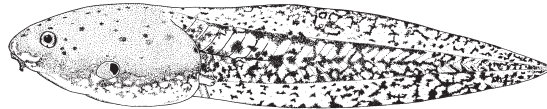
A medium-size tadpole that transforms around 1 1/2 inches; tail fin heavily mottled with black and is often interspersed with orange or red coloration; transforms within 6 to 8 weeks.



Illustrations by  
Tom R. Johnson

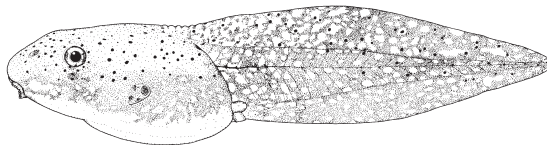
### Green frog

A medium- to large-size tadpole with slender body and strongly marked with dark mottling; may take up to 12 months to transform into froglets, therefore, select a green frog tadpole that is at least 2 1/2 inches, which will complete metamorphosis within 6 to 12 weeks.



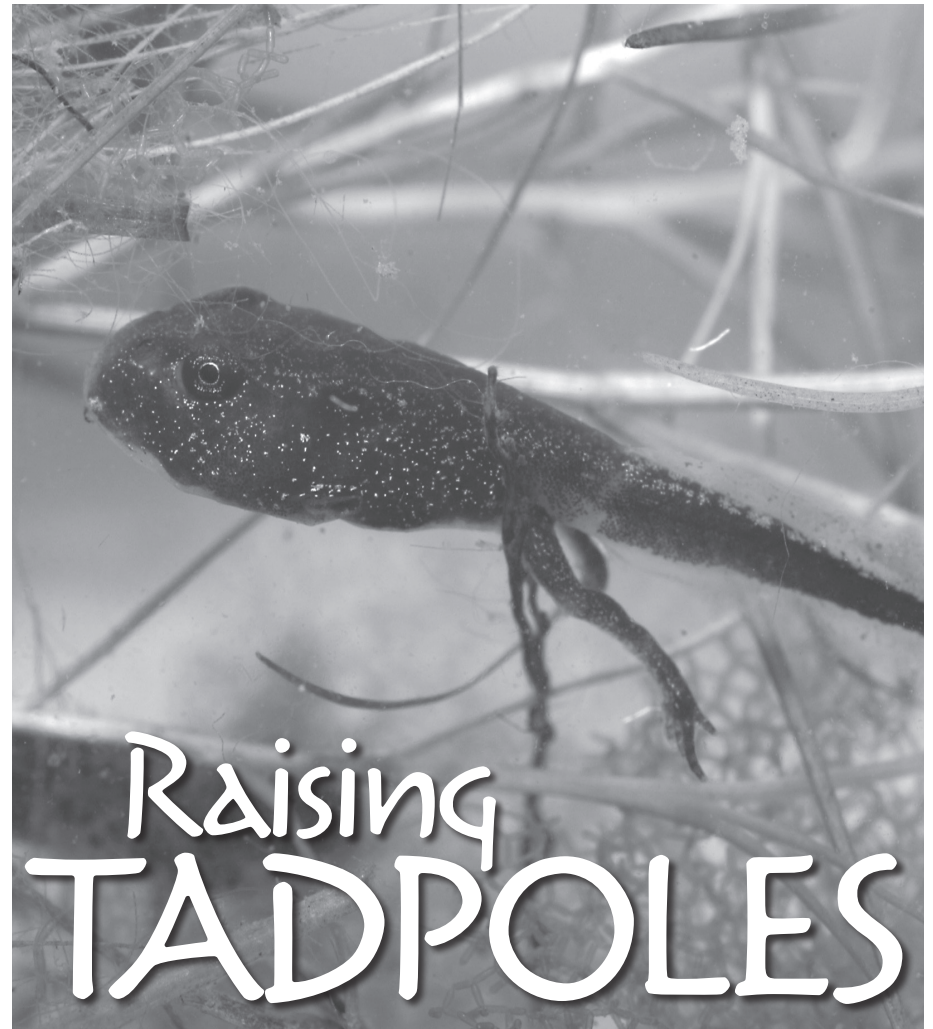
### Bullfrog

A large tadpole with tiny black dots on the upper body; may take up to 14 months to transform into froglets, therefore, select at least a 3-inch tadpole that should complete metamorphosis within 6 to 12 weeks.



Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs of the Missouri Department of Conservation is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Questions should be directed to the Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, (573) 751-4115 (voice) or 800-735-2966 (TTY), or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203.

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# Raising TADPOLES

A KIDS' GUIDE



Serving nature and you

*Raising tadpoles is an excellent project to learn about the life history of frogs and the responsibility of caring for animals. With a little time, energy and patience, the transformation of tadpoles into a new toadlet or froglet can be a fun and educational experience. Listed below are instructions for a successful tadpole project.*

### Equipment and supplies needed to raise tadpoles

- Continuous supply of aged water
- 5-gallon aquarium or shallow, plastic dish pan
- Smaller container for feeding area
- Fresh lettuce or spinach
- Tropical fish flakes
- Rabbit pellets or hard boiled eggs
- Fresh insects

## Where to find tadpoles

Tadpoles can be either purchased from stores or obtained from the wild. You can readily buy tadpole kits from biological supply companies or pet stores in place of doing it yourself. However, these tadpoles will most likely develop into African clawed frogs or other non-native species, which by law cannot be released in Missouri because they compete with native species and spread disease.

By collecting tadpoles yourself, you are assured of getting a species native to Missouri. Native tadpoles can easily be found in ponds, lakes, creeks and wet ditches in the spring. In most cases, your property supports tadpoles. If not, ask permission to collect tadpoles on private property. Tadpoles should not be removed from public areas such as conservation areas, state parks and wildlife refuges. To abide by the laws, never collect more than five tadpoles from the wild.

## Before the tadpoles arrive

- Before collecting tadpoles, you must have on hand a supply of “aged” water. Aged water is regular tap water that has stood in an open container for at least 24 hours. The “aging” allows the chlorine gas, which can cause death in tadpoles, to evaporate. Because you must change the water after each feeding, you must continue to keep aged water on hand throughout the project.
- Overcrowding is the most common reason for the failure of tadpole projects, so you must collect the number of tadpoles based on the size of the container you plan to use. Five tadpoles can be successfully kept in a 5-gallon aquarium. If using shallow, plastic dish pans, two to three tadpoles are plenty.
- Place approximately 2 inches of aged water in your container, then add the appropriate number of tadpoles to fit the container.

Also prepare a separate smaller container filled with aged water as a feeding area. If the tadpoles are fed in a separate container, the larger container won't need to be cleaned as often.

## Feeding

Before feeding, place the tadpoles in a separate feeding container that is filled with aged water.

Twice a day, feed each tadpole:

- 2 tablespoons of fresh lettuce or spinach that has been boiled for 10 to 15 minutes. Canned spinach should not be used for tadpoles because of the high salt content.
- 1/2 teaspoon of tropical fish flakes

Once a week, feed 1 teaspoon crushed rabbit pellets or a small flake of hard-boiled egg yolk as a protein source.

An hour after the tadpoles have eaten, return them to their larger container. Clean the feeding container thoroughly. Do not use soap or any other cleaning agent. If the tadpoles are fed in their aquarium or larger pan, it should be cleaned the same way and clean aged water should be added.

## Caring for tadpoles

If a separate feeding container is used, the aquarium or pan should be thoroughly cleaned without soap or other cleaning agent once a week or sooner if the water is dirty.

Once the front legs develop, place a screen on top of the pan or aquarium so the tadpoles can't escape. To prevent drowning during metamorphosis, put a rock in the middle of the pan or aquarium at or slightly above the water level so the tadpoles can crawl out of the water.

When transformation accelerates, the tadpoles will not eat due to changes in their digestive track. Their nourishment will come from the reabsorption of their tails. After the tail has been absorbed, the toadlet or froglet will soon become interested in eating tiny grasshoppers, crickets, flies or bloodworms. These tiny prey items are often difficult to obtain, so native Missouri amphibians should be released as soon as possible in the same area where they were collected.

## What to do with the toadlets or froglets

Upon completion of the project, healthy tadpoles that were collected from the wild can be released at the location where originally captured.

**Note:** *It is against the law to release any frog or tadpole that you purchase from a biological supply company or pet store into the wild. Many of these frogs do not occur naturally in Missouri and introducing a new predator with potentially new diseases and parasites into the environment can hurt native frogs and other native species. If you purchased tadpoles, you must keep them secure in aquariums, humanely destroy them so they won't get into Missouri's ecosystems or check with pet stores to see if they will take them.*