

Getting dragons to eat their veggies

Many dragons take a while to learn to eat their veggies. Some suggestions:

- mist the greens,
- add crickets to the greens,
- hand-feed the greens
- withhold crickets for a couple of days, and giving only greens.
- put the greens in a very shallow bowl so they can see them
(particularly for babies: if they can't see them, they won't go to eat them),
- Try putting in a large leaf. If you do this, attach the leaf to something (e.g., with a paper clamp) so they can pull on it to tear off a piece. Otherwise, they carry the leaf around trying to shake a bite out of it—cute, but frustrating for them.
- And, or course, if they won't eat their greens, feed their greens to the crickets--gut-load the crickets with the greens, and the dragons will get the stuff anyway.

Posts from my personal archives on the subject:

Patti Linder

Cosmo wouldn't eat veggies when we first got him. I always offered them, but he wouldn't touch them until I handfed him a small piece of carrot. I took it out of the veggie dish while he watched me, and fed him 2-3 pieces like this. He really loved those carrots. A few days later I caught him eating the carrots off the top of the veggie dish and soon added butternut squash pieces which he also ate. Every once in a while he would accidentally get a piece of some greens and now he eats all kinds of veggies, although still not very much of any of them. I Always put his veggie bowl in the same location, someplace he can see from his basking spot and keep them sprayed with water so he gets the added benefit from the moisture.

Amy

Many dragons will not eat veggies... just make sure they are there. You can spray them some to draw attention. Something we learned recently...if you drop some crickets in and let them eat what's there. Or this is what happened with out babies anyway...while they are looking around for more crickets. Start dropping little pieces of the leaves down. Since our guys know that food pours from the heavens, they immediately ran over and eat the stuff. It came from above, so it's food right?? Although they are not avid green eaters. they know they are not evil now and are eating some. When they are younger they do tend to eat more bugs than veggies anyway..

Steve Shotwell:

You dust your crickets with calcium, right? Try sprinkling some of that calcium on top of the salad. It helped with my kids. I still dust my salad once or twice a week and my kids always eat better when its dusted. They always look like they have been eating powdered doughnuts because they get it all over their mouths:) Too, cute.

Kathryn:

Dragons often wake up hungry. I feed the veggies in the morning, then the crickets an hour later or (if the dragons are older) after work.

Another major issue is that they have to be able to SEE the veggies easily. For babies, I use a container lid that is *flat*, and I cut the veggies and greens up fine. I put them in a *pile*, so the dragons can easily eat them (if the small pieces are lying flat on the dish, they can't pry them up and they get discouraged). This strategy has worked for mine, all of whom eat greens from babyhood.

Nathan Tenny:

I can think of a couple of ideas that might help:

- Dab chicken baby food heavily on leafy greens, or make a mix of the baby food and chopped-up veggies. They **can't** not like the baby food, can they?
- Have you tried edible plants that are not really veggies---for instance, hibiscus and other edible flowers? They may take an interest in the different "look" of flowers. Fruit also seems to be attractive to them---if you can get prickly-pear cactus fruit, and resist eating it yourself, **everything** will eat that stuff.
- This would be a **huge** pain, but you could attach leaves to crickets (or other insect prey) somehow, let them take the crickets and find themselves starting to ingest a dandelion leaf or something---if they start on the leaf they may finish.
- If the dragons won't eat the salad, gutload insects on it---it's the same stuff after the bugs chew it up, after all.

Ronnie Buck:

There are a couple of things you can try to get them started. Hold a leaf out in front of his nose, a little off center and wiggle it up and down at eye level. Sometimes the movement will entice them to take that first bite. You might want to try this with yellow squash first. I think that if you cut it into a slender strip, the white color looks like a soft juicy mealworm, yummy... That usually works, and every one of mine love squash. Once they try it and if they like it, they will usually eat the "mealworms" from a nice bed of salad, which will soon start to disappear too.

The other thing to try is if he gets a little to warm and has his mouth open, stick a leaf in it =0) He'll either chew it up and swallow it, or spit it out.

Gail in Nova Scotia

I have only been a dragon slave for two months now, and I received a beautiful healthy baby from Reptile Rascals and she has been great. During her first week when she was adjusting to her new palace and was reluctant to feed, I tried a "veggie clip" and that was the first thing that worked. It is available at any aquarium shop and is just a strong clip attached to a suction cup. The clip holds the greens and I stuck it to the side of the tank right by her favorite basking spot. Within a few hours she was tugging happily at her greens. She still enjoys tearing pieces off her clip, even though she has a wonderful appetite and eats from her salad bowl too.

Jenn:

I just thought I would share this as no one has mentioned it before and maybe it will help those of you with reluctant feeders. Make the salads really small at first so you don't waste so much. Eating just a bit at first is normal. Remember if your grocery store sells greens by the pound, you do **not** have to buy the whole bunched up thing! If its sold by the pound, you can just get a few leaves. No point paying for all that stuff if you only need half of it. Shake the water off too, water weighs a lot when buying greens.

..try some dandelion leaves... Draco and Jas go nuts on those things **G** Especially if you hang them from the top of the cage and then hit them with a fan so they sway in the wind. Ooooooo movement it must be food :)