

# Bladder Snail *Physa acuta*

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By John Moyles

The bladder snail (*Physa acuta*), also called “pond snails”, are commonly considered to be a pest in the home aquarium, but some people find them useful. When the population reaches plague proportions, I take action to get rid of them only to find them again in a few months.

No one really knows where *P. acuta* originates since it is pretty much found everywhere. They are highly adaptable and that is the reason they do so well in aquariums. They are prolific breeders. They are hermaphrodites and are capable of self fertilization. They lay anywhere from 50 to 500 eggs at a time and the young are capable of breeding at around 8 weeks of age.

*P. acuta* eat algae and uneaten food so they are useful in that regard. They are also a good live food for puffer or predatory fish. They can become a nuisance by clogging filters or becoming unsightly.

With their adaptability and high rate of reproduction, it is easy to imagine how these can take over a tank or a system of tanks. When I worked at a large “big box” pet retailer we had a tank system where all of the tanks were connected by one big filter. The snails would become trapped in the loc-lines that provided the fresh water to the individual tanks. I took drastic action. Tank by tank I removed the gravel, boiled it, bleached it and replaced it. After that I put 1 clown loach in each tank to eat any ones that I missed. This worked for about a year when they slowly started to come back. Some easier ways of controlling their population include putting “vacation feeders” in the aquarium over night and removing them once they are covered in snails. When the population of nuisance snails gets to large at home, I simply drain the tank, remove the gravel and scrub it out. This seems to keep the population numbers down to a manageable number.