Seven Cardinal Sins of Saltwater Aquaria Keeping

From Stan & Debbie Hauter,
Your Guide to Saltwater Aquariums.
http://saltaquarium.about.com/od/educationaltools/

Common Mistakes Made by Saltwater Aquarists

Having been your About Guides to Saltwater Aquariums since 1997, from all the email we have received and the bulletin board postings we've read and replied to over the years, we have noticed that most people's saltwater aquarium keeping problems seem to stem from making the same common mistakes.

By being aware of the mistakes that are most often made by other aquarists, they can be avoided. Therefore, here is our list of what we consider to be the Seven Cardinal Sins of Saltwater Aquaria Keeping.

1. **Moving Too Fast** - "Patience" is a requirement with just about anything that you do with a saltwater aquarium. Far too many people report problems after they have put a tank together, because they are just moving too fast! Far too often we have read aquarists comments like, "I need test kits? What for and what kind"? And, this is after they have had a tank for some time.

   A high percentage of people do not take the time to read and study up on the hobby BEFORE getting started. One of the other top mistakes of moving too fast is "overloading" a tank with too much livestock and/or live rock all at once, especially when a tank has not fully cycled, or doing so within days of cycle completion. Even in well a established tank, adding too many critters too fast can cause a puzzling problem called new tank syndrome. Slow down!! Saltwater aquaria keeping is NOT a timed event, so take it easy and work on your patience skills!

2. **Misdiagnosing Diseases & Over Medicating** - When it comes to diagnosing diseases, saltwater ich is the biggest problem. It is easy to confuse Oodinium (Amyloodinium ocellatum - a.k.a. Marine Velvet or Coral Fish Disease) with White Spot Disease (Cryptocaryon irritans). They are similar, but two quite different types of saltwater ich, and each responds to different types of treatment. Using the wrong medication to treat these diseases can be fatal. It is important to learn how to properly diagnose and treat these parasites, as well as other diseases. The Fish Disease Trouble Shooter can help you make the right diagnosis. As far as using medications, way too often one or more remedies are just thrown at a problem without knowing what it is. We feel that medications should only be used when necessary, and whenever possible, only in a Quarantine Tank using a remedy that "targets" the problem you actually have.
3. **Inadequate Filtration** - Having sufficient biological filtration is the one of the keys to success in keeping a saltwater aquarium. There are a number of filtration methods to choose from, but not making the right filter selection for the bio-load planned for your tank can lead to a wide variety of problems. It is always better to have too much biological filtration, rather than too little.

4. **Livestock Incompatibility** - We receive email messages with statements such as "my wrasse ate my hermit crab", or "my tangs just won't get along" all too frequently. Purchasing livestock without researching whether or not they will peacefully reside with other tank mates can lead to dead or injured critters, as well as stress related diseases. Use common sense; learn about the compatibility of critters before putting them together!

5. **Purchasing Livestock Without Knowing What They Are and How To Care For Them** - It is amazing how many people select new additions for their tank without even knowing what they are and how to feed them. If an LFS sales person can't tell you about an animal in their store, especially its dietary requirements, as well as demonstrate that it is eating before you buy it, then run, don't walk to the nearest exit. Don't buy on impulse. Take the time to learn about an animal you want to buy. BEFORE doing so! The Fish Care by Species Index was designed to make this job a lot easier.

6. **Purchasing Fish in Poor Health** - One of the easiest things to do when selecting a critter is to determine whether or not it is healthy. In a simple phrase: most sick fish don't eat. Once again, always have your LFS sales person show you that a fish is eating before purchasing it. On your part, learn how to recognize the symptoms or outward signs of common illnesses so you know what to look for when inspecting livestock to buy.

7. **Lack of Performing Routine Tank Maintenance Tasks** - Well maintained tanks seldom experience high nitrate levels, bacterial outbreaks, or other common tank problems. Therefore, to avoid the common pitfalls that may stem from this area, we strongly advise following a regular maintenance routine.

Of course there are many other areas where aquarists make mistakes, but we feel that this list pretty much covers a majority of the most common ones made. By taking advice from those that have been there, you'll save yourself a lot of headaches and frustration in the long run.