



JASON THRESHER

Age: 35.

Hometown:
Bookham, Surrey, UK.

Occupation:
IT manager; owner of
Reef Culture.

Marine experience:
18 years.

Tank size:
24g D-D Nano Cube.

Favourite
fish: gobies and blennies.
coral: zoanthids
and polylthoa.
other: Pistol Shrimp.

Specialist areas:
Coral propagation.

This month I will be demonstrating how to frag Plating Montipora. This is the second SPS coral to be fragged in the series, and requires roughly the same type of post-fragging care as the Birdsnest coral. It is extremely easy to propagate and is well worth the effort due to its popularity in the trade.

While they are not as colourful as many other corals, their attraction lies in the amazing spiral plates that form while the coral matures. Colours you can expect to find at your LFS will vary from purples, reds and greens to oranges and rusty browns. They adapt well to aquarium life and can quickly grow into a really stunning centrepiece.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

SPS CUTTERS: I will be using 8ins bone cutters to remove the frags. Remember to rinse all tools in fresh water and dry them thoroughly afterwards.

Saltwater is very corrosive, and if you have invested in decent tools it is worth looking after them properly.

CYANOACRYLATE GEL: I recommend using a gel for SPS corals. The thicker consistency is perfect for holding the frag in place while it cures.

FRAG PLUGS: I will be using small ceramic plugs.

FRAG STATION: A frag station will support the frags while the gel cures.

CONTAINERS: The containers will house the frags removed from the mother colony.

PAPER TOWELS: The bottom of the frag will probably become very slimy after you cut it, and will be difficult to glue to the plug. By gently dabbing it onto the paper towel, most of the slime should be removed, allowing a solid bond to form between the coral, the gel and the plug.

HOW TO FRAG PLATING MONTIPORA

Depending on the size of your Monti, you will probably have to frag it in the tank because the larger colonies are usually attached to heavy rock structures, which causes all sorts of problems when you try to move them. The last thing you need is a rockslide that cracks the tank and damages the corals!

If you have a smaller Monti you are fragging, make sure to keep it moist if you remove it from the tank. I suggest keeping it submerged in one of the containers until you are ready to frag it.

FRAGGING MONTIPORA

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Montipora* sp

COMMON NAME: PLATING CORAL, MONTIS



The two best options for fragging are:

- Cut out sections of the plate while still attached to the mother colony, making sure to keep incisions neat. You want to avoid the coral looking like you used a weed eater to frag it!
- Snap off a plate and cut it up into smaller frags

For this tutorial I will be snapping off a plate to show you what to expect.

Gently grip the Monti plate close to the base and slowly move it up and down. With a bit of encouragement, the plate should snap off close to the base. Place the plate in the container to keep it wet. I usually cut my frags larger than the frag plug I'm using, as it immediately hides the plug from view if it is introduced into the main tank.

Now use the SPS cutters to cut up the plate. When you are done the frags are ready to be mounted.

MOUNTING THE FRAG

Firstly, prepare the plug by placing a drop of gel in the centre. Remove the frag from the container and dab it a few times against the paper towel to remove the slime. Press the frag onto the gel and leave it to cure for about 60 seconds. The glue should cure fully when you return the frag to the water in the container. Repeat this process until you have mounted all the frags.

This might seem obvious, but make sure all the frags are the right way up in the container after you have cut them up. The frags look similar on the top and bottom, and it is easy to make the mistake of mounting it upside down. (Yes, I am unfortunately speaking from experience!)

POST-FRAGGING TREATMENT

Many people recommend using a light iodine dip on the frags. It should combat post-fragging infections and aid with healing. As with every tutorial, you need to keep an eye on the frags and remove them if any start to die. It is also important to maintain calcium levels in the tank because newly fragged SPS corals can strip it very quickly.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Montis are easy to frag, and with a little practice and decent water quality, you could soon have loads of healthy frags in your tank! **JT**

JASON'S STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO... FRAGGING MONTIPORA



STEP 1

Grip the plate of the healthy mother colony you wish to remove, and wiggle it up and down until it snaps off.



STEP 2

Use the SPS cutters to cut the plate into smaller pieces to mount on the frag plugs.



STEP 3

Keep the frags in the container until you are ready to mount them. I have cut the Monti plate into three smaller frags.



STEP 4

Using the reef gel, wipe the bottom of the Montipora frag, and mount it.



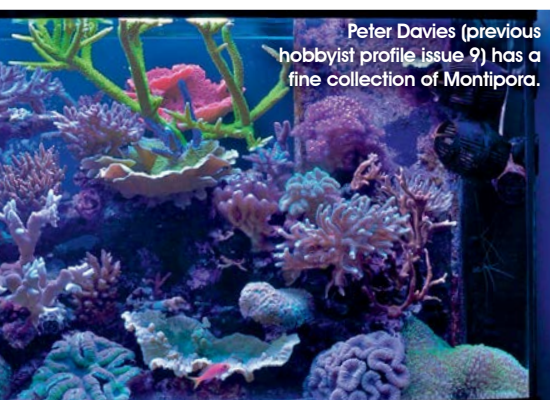
STEP 5

Here you can see the finished product.



STEP 6

After about a month the Monti will start basing out and encrusting the frag plug.



Peter Davies (previous hobbyist profile issue 9) has a fine collection of Montipora.

We would like to thank John and Tania at Living Reef Aquatics for providing the Monti in this article.