

**Benefiting commercial aquaculture,
Conserving natural resources**



**Division of
Aquaculture**

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Species used in aquaponics: Rules and regs

Floridians are constructing and operating aquaponic systems for home or commercial use. These systems typically include tilapia (*Oreochromis* spp.) and potentially the Malaysian prawn (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) or the red claw crayfish (*Cherax quadricarinatus*).

These aquatic animals can be integral biological components of the system to provide dissolved nutrients for the growing plants, clean the system of organic detritus, or as co-products that can be eaten by the owner or sold for human consumption.

However, these animals are not native to Florida and there are restrictions concerning their live possession, culture, transportation and sale.

These restrictions were implemented to prevent their establishment and spread and the unintended changes to

Florida's environment and native species that might occur. State rule prohibits the release of any nonnative species, including those used in aquaponic systems, into Florida waters.

Four tilapia species (*O. aureus*, *O. niloticus*, *O. urolepis* and *O. mossambicus*) and their hybrids and the red claw crayfish are designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as "conditional species."

Conditional species are not allowed for personal possession. FWC will not issue a permit to possess these species in backyard aquaponic systems.

Of the four tilapias, only the blue tilapia (*O. aureus*) may be possessed, transported, and cultured without a permit in four FWC regions: North Central (Citrus County only), Northeast, South, and Southwest. These four regions are located south of a line drawn diagonally across the state from Crystal River through St. Augustine.

Blue tilapia must be identified as pure blue by FWC staff or an FWC designee. All other tilapia species or hybrids are prohibited in Florida.

Individuals interested in starting or operating an aquaponic facility as a commercial business producing aquatic animals, including conditional species, must apply for an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration. Certi-

fied facilities are regulated by the Division of Aquaculture via Best Management Practices, in accordance with Chapter 597, Florida Aquaculture Policy Act, Florida Statutes. For information about certification or to apply for a Certificate,

please visit: <http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com>.

Vegetable production is regulated by the Division of Fruit and Vegetables, for more information, visit: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/fruits/>.

Individuals that plan to sell their animal products for human consumption must acquire a Food Permit from the Division of Food Safety. For more information, visit <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/fs/inspectn.html>.

For aquaponic production information, contact Mr. Carlos Martinez with the University of Florida's Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory at 813-671-5230 ext/109 or carlosvm@ufl.edu.



Tilapia



Red claw crayfish
This species may not be used in backyard aquaponic systems



Malaysian prawn

Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner of Agriculture