



Arizona Blonde Tarantula Care Guide

Aphonopelma chalcodes — Chamberlin, 1940

Experience	Lifespan	Adult Legspan	Origin
Beginner	20–30 years (females)	5–6 in DLS	Sonoran Desert, USA & Mexico

Natural History

Aphonopelma chalcodes — the Arizona Blonde, also called the Desert Blonde — is native to the Sonoran Desert of the south-western United States and northern Mexico. It spends the dry, scorching days sealed inside deep burrows and emerges at dusk to hunt, avoiding the worst of the desert heat.

Everything about its care follows from that desert origin: it is built for dry conditions, a slow metabolism, and long periods of inactivity. Mature males are famous for wandering across desert roads in late summer in search of females, but in captivity this is an unhurried, sedentary spider.

Adults are a soft tan to blonde, with paler hairs on the legs that give the species its name. It is one of the longest-lived tarantulas in the hobby — females can pass 25 years — and its calm temperament and undemanding care make it an excellent, if slow-growing, beginner species.

Housing

The Arizona Blonde is a terrestrial desert burrower. Give it floor space and a solid depth of dry substrate to dig into; height should be kept low, as this heavy-bodied spider is harmed by falls.

Life Stage	Enclosure	Notes
Spiderling (under 1")	Deli cup / small vented container	Mostly dry substrate, deep enough to burrow, small water source
Juvenile (1–3")	16 oz – 1 gal enclosure	Deep dry substrate, cork hide, shallow water dish
Sub-adult / Adult (3"+)	5–10 gal or equivalent	4–5 in of dry substrate, cork hide, water dish, good airflow

Provide 4–5 inches of dry substrate — coconut fibre, peat, or a topsoil mix — so the spider can dig. Add a cork bark hide as a starter retreat and a permanent water dish. A horizontal, low enclosure suits it far better than a tall one.

Temperature & Humidity

Warm and dry reflects the Sonoran Desert. This species tolerates the upper end of the temperature range comfortably.

Parameter	Target	Notes
Temperature	70–85°F (21–29°C)	Tolerates desert warmth well; avoid sustained drops below 65°F
Ambient Humidity	30–40% RH	Low — this is a true desert species
Substrate	Dry	Keep it dry; the water dish supplies all the moisture needed
Water	Permanent water dish	Keep filled at all times

MOST COMMON MISTAKE

Keeping it humid. The Arizona Blonde is a desert animal and damp, poorly ventilated conditions will quickly cause health problems. Dry substrate plus a full water dish is all it needs.

Feeding

The Arizona Blonde has a notably slow metabolism and a modest appetite. It eats steadily but unhurriedly, and like other desert species it can fast for extended periods, particularly in cooler months — this is normal in a healthy spider.

Prey: Gut-loaded crickets, Dubia roaches, and the occasional mealworm. Keep prey no larger than the spider's abdomen.

Frequency: Juveniles every 7–10 days, adults every 10–14 days when feeding. Do not be alarmed by seasonal fasts; keep the water dish full and offer food occasionally.

Remove uneaten prey within 24 hours, especially during a fast or pre-moult.

Moulting

This is among the slowest-growing tarantulas in the hobby, and adults may moult only once a year or less. A fresh moult restores the soft blonde colouration at its cleanest.

Pre-moult signs: A darkened abdomen, prolonged food refusal, lethargy, and sometimes sealing of the burrow. Remove all live prey at the first signs.

Post-moult: Leave the spider undisturbed and wait 7–14 days before feeding so the new exoskeleton and fangs harden fully. Keep the water dish topped up throughout.

Handling

The Arizona Blonde is calm and slow-moving, and is one of the more handleable species when it is out of its burrow. Its unhurried nature makes sudden bolts unlikely, but handling is always done at the keeper's own risk and never entirely without it.

Urticating hairs are present (Type III) and may be kicked off the abdomen when the spider feels threatened — they can irritate skin and are especially uncomfortable near the eyes. Keep sessions calm and brief, stay low over a soft surface, and never handle over a hard floor, as a fall can rupture the abdomen and be fatal.

This guide was compiled using commonly accepted husbandry practices from experienced keepers and industry-standard tarantula care resources.

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