

Build Your Own Terrarium



Objective: A terrarium is like a miniature habitat growing inside a container. Be creative in designing your mini-world and recognize the phases of the water cycle when it's complete.

Materials:

- An enclosed container like a plastic food container with a hinged lid like the kind that holds strawberries or salad greens at the store. You can also use a plastic bottle by cutting off the top to build the terrarium, then taping it back on.
- Plastic bag (old bread bag) if your container's design includes holes at the bottom.
- Pea gravel or small rock
- Potting soil or dirt
- Larger rock(s) for decoration like mountains
- Small indoor plants like succulents (optional)
- Clumps of moss scraped off a fence, brick wall or patio. Moss is everywhere if you take a look.
- Found natural objects like sticks or pinecones
- Spray bottle with water



Terrarium Instructions

1. Find your container. You can re-use the plastic containers used to hold some fruits or veggies purchased at the store. Wash and dry your container.
2. You may need to cover the bottom half of the container with plastic if the gravel rocks are small enough to fall through holes in the container.
3. Cover the bottom of the container with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of gravel. The gravel mimics the bedrock found under the earth's soils and allows excess water to drain from the soil.
4. Add a potting soil layer. Your potting soil should be moist but not dripping wet. You should be able to press it into a clump. When placing it in the terrarium, you can make hills and valleys if you like.
5. Place the larger rock(s) for decoration. Does it look like a boulder or a mountain?
6. If you have a small plant, make a small hole in the soil and add the plant roots. Succulents will grow from just a leaf stem end buried slightly in the soil.
7. Add moss clumps all around your terrarium.
8. Place any other objects you found from nature.
9. Spray your terrarium with water to provide moisture to the mosses.
10. Close the lid and keep your terrarium in a spot out of the direct sun.

Questions

A terrarium is an enclosed environment. It won't need added water. Do you know why?

Describe the three phases of the water cycle in your terrarium: evaporation, condensation and precipitation.

How does temperature affect the water cycle?