

Building a Terrarium

Many may remember terrariums with the same nostalgia as the macramé plant hanger, but the reason terrariums were popular then are why they are still popular today – their easy, low maintenance approach to caring for plants.

What you need to get started:

A glass container, with or without a lid, pea gravel, activated charcoal, sheet moss, potting mix, plants, decorative extras like rock, bark and moss.

The layers of the terrarium are very important to maintain a healthy environment for your plants.

First layer: Start with a layer of pea gravel at least 2 inches deep. Your jar will not have drainage holes so this layer of gravel will act as a draining reservoir when watering.

Second layer: Next add a ½ inch layer of charcoal. Charcoal will act as your terrarium’s filter, keeping the environment sweet and clean.

Third layer: Position a layer of sheet moss over the charcoal to keep the soil from sinking into the first layers.

Fourth layer: Next pour in the potting mix. It is critical that you use high-quality potting mix without moisture crystals. You are creating a landscape and very few landscapes are completely flat. Use the soil to add areas of higher and lower elevation.

And finally add your plants. Some plants that do well in terrariums are:

Baby Tears	Parlor Palm
Creeping Fig	Peperomia
Croton	Selaginella, club moss
Ferns, all types	Tillandsias

When planting, knock off extra soil from the roots; make sure roots are completely covered by soil. Try not to let plants touch the sides of the container, especially if there is a lid, as they can cause disease. Water your terrarium lightly after planting to moisten everything.

Watering: A closed terrarium might go months between watering. If condensation is not forming on the inside of the container or you see wilting plants it is probably time to add more water. After watering a closed terrarium, don’t replace the lid until the foliage is dry. Open terrariums will need more frequent watering – let the plant be your guide as to how often. And remember, because terrariums have no external draining, watering must be light.

Light: Place your terrarium in bright, but indirect light. Direct sun can burn the plants through the glass. Plants might start to grow toward the light source so turn your terrarium occasionally to keep it growing properly.

Pruning: All plants will eventually outgrow the limited space without trimming. Prune on a regular basis to keep plants bushy and full and always trim vegetation from the terrarium. To help keep plants small and manageable, do not fertilize.



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