



Gardening Indoors With Terrariums

When you build a terrarium, you are creating your own miniature green space enclosed by glass. The best vessels will range from 8”-15” in diameter, be deep enough to hold at least 3” of substrate layers, and either have a lid or sides that are tall enough to provide adequate humidity. It is this humidity that makes terrariums so fascinating – an opportunity to view plant transpiration in action and, with a little patience, to create a self-sustaining environment for your plants.

A Few Considerations...

- Choose a container with clear, non-tinted glass and without bubbles which can obstruct the view. Most terrarium plants prefer strong indirect light, so clarity and lack of distortion will benefit them as well.
- Plants that are naturally small and slow-growing are best suited for your miniature landscape. On the other hand, large, fast-growing plants will provide a lush, immediate display. When they outgrow their space, don't prune, just replace with new plants. Pot them up – your houseplant collection will grow as your terrarium continues to evolve.
- Choose a display site with strong, indirect light, perfect for most terrarium plants. Direct sunlight on glass may damage plants and will lead to obscuring condensation. For a site with direct sun, consider making a dish garden with succulents instead – see our tip sheets *Dish Gardens: A Little Bit of Land* and *Success with Succulents*.
- Moisture and light needs vary among terrarium plants. A group of plants with similar needs will simplify maintenance.
- The design process for a terrarium is simple: choose a vertical element, several rounded elements, and some which creep and spread. The size of your container will dictate how many of each type to choose.
- Add embellishments for a personal touch: go outside to hunt for stones, twigs, bark and seedpods; collect shells, geodes and crystals; repurpose miniature items, furniture or dollhouse figures to complete your tiny landscape. The décor of your terrarium might also be switched out periodically to reflect holidays and the changing seasons.

Time to Go Shopping!

Consider going in together with friends to share the cost of bulk supplies and tools. Creating terrariums with friends can be quite inspiring. Here are the basics – some to buy, some you can make, others you might already have on hand:

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| • Glass Container | • Funnel made of stiff paper | • Coffee filters (or Sheet Moss) |
| • Pebbles, Gravel or <i>Soil Perfector</i> | • Tamper made of Champagne cork | • Turkey baster for direct watering |
| • Charcoal | • Spoon fastened to a long stick | • Mister |
| • Cactus Potting Mix | • Long tongs and/or chopsticks | and, of course... |
| • Sheet Moss and/or Soil Topper | | THE PLANTS! |

Once you've gathered all your supplies, you are ready to begin...

Terrariums Step by Step:

Clean your container. Use glass cleaner now because you won't be able to use it once the plants are in place. Don't forget to remove any price tags or stickers *before* you start filling up your vessel!

Create the bed. The substrate layers are the most important steps in ensuring success with a terrarium. Quantities for each layer will vary with the size of the vessel. If you prefer *not* to see the various layers, line the sides with sheet moss before you begin. To prevent the glass from becoming scratched or dirty use a cone of paper to funnel the materials into the vessel. Place rinsed pebbles, gravel or *Soil Perfector* as a first layer. Next, a thin layer of rinsed charcoal. Then use sheet moss or a large coffee filter over the charcoal to prevent soil from washing into the drainage area below.

Add the soil – a high quality cactus potting mix is best. It should be moistened prior to adding to the terrarium. The soil layer depth should be appropriate for the size and scale of the terrarium and the sufficient for the root mass of your plants. Use your tamping tool to smooth and level the soil and then wipe off any dust or marks on the glass.

Prepare plants and accessories. Arrange your plants and accessories outside of the terrarium prior to placing them inside. Tip the plants from their pots, and gently re-shape and flatten the rootball, loosening and trimming roots if necessary. With the relatively shallow stratum of soil in your terrarium, the roots need to be directed horizontally.

Add plants and accessories. Using your spoon tool and following your design, scoop shallow divots in the soil mix, being careful not to dig too deeply and tear the coffee filter. Place your plants in the divots and nestle them in, making sure they are firmly embedded in the soil layer. Use tongs or chopsticks if you have a very tall vessel. Firmly tamp down the soil around and between the plants. Add your accent items and rotate the terrarium to look at it from different angles and adjust your display as needed. When you are sure you have the plants where you like, add the moss or soil topper.

Clean the glass one final time. Use a mister and then dry the glass with a sponge paintbrush. You can spray glass cleaner on the outside but don't spray it inside the terrarium as it could damage the plants.

Leave the lid off for the first week or so until the plants absorb excess moisture as they begin to root in. Experiment with leaving the lid on for short periods until you find the humidity balance point for your home environment.

Maintenance:

- Water sparingly at first, carefully observing your plants as they become established. Use the turkey baster to water directly at the root mass to keep foliage undisturbed and the surrounding areas from becoming over-saturated.
- Rotate the terrarium regularly for even growth. Move away from or closer to the light if signs of stress appear.
- Keep fertilization to a minimum: we recommend *Bonide Cactus Plant Food 2-7-7* once a month, May to September.
- From time to time, open closed terrariums and vent for a half-day. Take this time to remove dead foliage, trim up straggling plants, rearrange your accessories and clean up the glass.

Some of Our Favorite Terrarium Plants:

Upright	Mounding	Creeping	Flowering [Minis]
<i>Begonia dreg</i> /Maple-leaf Begonia	<i>Cryptanthus spp.</i> /EarthStar	<i>Ficus pum</i> /Creeping Fig	<i>Begonia</i>
<i>Chamaedorea ele</i> /ParlorPalm	Ferns – Minis	<i>Hedera hel</i> /Ivy - Minis	<i>Cyclamen</i>
Croton and <i>Dracaena</i> - Minis	<i>Fittonia spp.</i> /Nerve Plant	<i>Pilea glau</i> 'Aquamarine'	<i>Euphorbia pul</i> /Poinsettia
<i>Ophiopogon jap</i> /Mini Mondo	<i>Hypoestes</i> /Polka-Dot Plant	<i>Saxifraga sto</i> /Strawberry Begonia	<i>Orchid</i>
<i>Pseuderanthemum</i> /Flame-leaf Ivy	<i>Peperomia spp.</i> – Minis	<i>Selaginella</i> /Spike Moss	<i>Saintpaulia</i> /African Violet
<i>Syngonium</i> /Arrowhead Plant	<i>Pilea spp.</i> /Aluminum Plant	<i>Soleirolia sol</i> /Baby's Tears	<i>Tillandsia</i> /Air Plant