

CLASSROOM TERRARIUMS

Another great idea for a classroom garden is to build terrariums. A terrarium is a contained environment, usually made from clear plastic or glass for observation. An easy way to explain a terrarium to students is to think about an aquarium with no water.

Try this lesson to easily construct terrariums for your home or classroom!

Supplies!

- 2-Liter Soda Bottle with Cap
- Potting Soil
- Pebbles
- Seedlings, 2 or 3
- Charcoal
- Sphagnum Moss
- Clear Packing Tape
- Box Cutter or Sharp Knife

Build your Terrarium

Make the Cut: Ask an adult to make an incision entirely around the 2-liter Bottle approximately 5 inches from the bottom.

Pebbles: Placing one to two inches of pebbles at the bottom will allow excess water to flow to the bottom of the bottle. The soil in the terrarium will become muddy if too much water collects without proper drainage. As the sunlight causes the temperature inside the bottle to rise, the water will be drawn up towards the top of the bottle before falling back to the soil. This works just like the Earth's water cycle, with moisture being drawn up into the sky and falling as rain.

Charcoal: The ½ inch layer of activated charcoal will act as a filter, cleaning the water as it flows up and down. Without a filter, bacteria growth in the soil can cause the plants to rot. Activated charcoal can be purchased at aquarium stores and most pet stores.

Sphagnum Moss: The moss is a plant that acts as screen to prevent your soil from settling down into the rocks, yet it allows the water to flow smoothly to the plant's roots.

Soil: Plants absorb nutrients from the soil with their roots.

Seedlings: Plant the seedlings in the soil. A top layer of moss may be added to improve the appearance of the terrarium and to help keep the soil moist.

Squeeze the top of the bottle over the bottom and tape in place. Don't forget to water your terrarium before placing the top on. The soil should be moist, but not soaked.

This terrific terrarium lesson provide by the gardeners at Longue Vue House and Gardens, New Orleans, LA.