

Flora & Fauna

How to Make Your Own Terrarium

A terrarium is the perfect, low-maintenance garden that can bring some outside beauty indoors. Here’s how you can make your own indoor garden to display or give away as a lovely gift:

1. Gather materials.

For this project, you’ll need a clear, semi-enclosed bowl, rocks or crystals, activated charcoal pieces, soil, gloves, plants (succulents of varying sizes do the trick!), and moss to add some decorative accents to your garden.

2. Start with rocks.

First, line the bottom of your bowl with the smooth rocks or crystals. This provides your terrarium with adequate water drainage. The bigger the bowl, the thicker the rock layer should be, but be careful not to fill your container too full! Leave enough space at the top for the rest of your terrarium.

3. Add charcoal.

Charcoal absorbs moisture and will keep your plants looking healthy without requiring too much water. It also keeps them from rotting. Add enough charcoal to cover the rocks and layer the container fully while still keeping an eye on your space at the top.

4. Layer the potting soil.

Make sure this layer is deep enough to cover the roots of your plants. This is an important step because you don’t want your plants to dry out, and they need the nutrients provided by the soil. If you are unsure which potting soil is best for the plants you’ve picked, look at the nursery tag or call a local nursery for their suggestions.

5. Add the plants.

Start with the larger succulents you picked and use the smaller ones to fill in the gaps. This is where you can get creative! If you are having a hard time positioning your smaller plants, try using tweezers or chopsticks to maneuver them more easily. Remember to tuck those roots into the soil!

6. Decorate.

Common terrarium accents include moss, twigs, sea glass, and geodes. This step will add to the aesthetic nature of your terrarium to make your lush, indoor garden really pop.

Helpful Hints:

- Never place your terrarium in direct sunlight.
- To water, mist the plants with a spray bottle.
- Do not overwater the plants. They’ll start to droop when they need more water.
- Keep the glass clean and condensation-free.

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Cleaning Corner:

How to Clean Vinyl Siding

After a busy summer full of rain, heat, and humidity, you might notice that the siding of your home is in need of a little TLC. Dirt and grime, mold and mildew—it can really drag down curb appeal.

Many people think you need a pressure washer to get rid of dirt and green mildew growth, but it’s not the most effective method. A soft-bristled brush and a little elbow grease will do a much better job.

You can pick up a special cleaner just for siding at your local home goods store or mix up your own by combining 1/3 cup laundry detergent, 1 quart of bleach, and 1 gallon of water into a large bucket.

Then simply dunk the brush in the bucket and scrub away. Work in small 10-foot sections and thoroughly rinse the area when you’re done. In no time at all, your home will look like new!

September

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| 1066 | The Norman conquest of England begins |
| 1620 | The Mayflower ship departs from Plymouth, England bound for America with 102 passengers and a small crew |
| 1666 | The Great Fire of London begins, destroying more than 13,000 houses |
| 1783 | The Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the American Revolutionary War |
| 1893 | New Zealand becomes the first country to grant women the right to vote |
| 1939 | Hitler invades Poland, starting World War II in Europe |
| 1990 | The “Two Plus Four Treaty” is signed to reunite East and West Germany |
| 1997 | Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Teresa dies from heart failure. Nine years later she is canonized in St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City. |

Healthy Living: Why Water Really Matters

Have you ever wondered how to keep your skin soft and wrinkle-free? Or what the real secret is to losing weight? The answer is simple: Drink more water!

Here's the scoop on just a few reasons why you should reach for an extra glass (or several!) each day:

- **Increases energy.** 60% of your body is made up of water. When you don't drink enough, your body becomes dehydrated and you can feel sluggish and tired. By drinking a glass or two of water every day, you will feel noticeably more energetic.
- **Keeps you focused.** Your brain is also comprised of mostly water. So if you don't hydrate frequently, brain function decreases, which makes it difficult for you to concentrate. It will result in you feeling tired and unmotivated to complete tasks.
- **Improves skin complexion.** Your brain isn't the only thing that needs water. The cells in your skin also need it to keep their buoyancy and elasticity. This is the *real* secret to fewer wrinkles and baby-smooth skin.
- **Promotes weight loss.** Did you know drinking water will help you lose weight? It's true! Drinking plenty of water helps flush out toxins and by-products of fat from our bodies. It's also excellent at curbing appetite and increasing your metabolism—all for zero calories!
- **Maintains regularity.** Along with flushing those toxins out of your body, drinking water regularly helps your digestive system by keeping things moving. Your kidneys will thank you too, because it means they don't have to work overtime to keep your system regulated!
- **Helps headaches.** One of the most common causes of headaches is dehydration. Whether you're preventing a headache or trying to relieve one, drinking water can make a big difference.
- **Prevents muscle cramps and strains.** When your joints and muscles are deprived of water, they can tense up, become stiff or cramp up. By drinking more water every day, you can keep your joints lubricated and muscles relaxed.

Kid Corner: The Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Now that school is back in session, homework will once again occupy a lot of your child's time. Though schoolwork is undoubtedly important, extracurricular activities are also incredibly beneficial to your child's overall development. Check out some of these key benefits:

1. **Exploration of Interests.** Encouraging extracurricular activities at a young age allows children to start finding their niche and their passions early. Without the opportunity to try something new, kids would never figure out what they really enjoy doing. Below are some different activities to explore with your child:
 - a. **Sports.** Soccer, T-ball, volleyball, basketball, bowling, golf, dance, and cheerleading
 - b. **Academic and Social Clubs.** Art, cooking, drama, math, science, sewing, yearbook, speech, writing, reading, debate, and drawing
 - c. **Music.** Choir, madrigals, musicals, band, an out-of-school instrumental practice, like piano, or even starting your own garage band!
2. **Boosting Confidence and Self-Esteem.** When kids find a sport, activity, or hobby they particularly enjoy, excelling at that activity boosts their self-confidence. The positive self-esteem they develop through their activities translates into other areas of their lives, helping them to become more self-confident, independent, and happier individuals.
3. **Cooperation.** Learning to work together and be a part of a team is an important skill for children and it's something they'll take with them into adulthood as well. By encouraging your child to join team activities, they will learn how to cooperate with others in a group setting. Extracurriculars are also the perfect setting for children to make new friends!
4. **Physical Benefits.** Active children are generally healthier, and though not all sports and physical activities appeal to all kids, it is important to get your child moving for 30–60 minutes each day. Trying out different sports is a great way to get your child excited about moving, and who knows? He might just be the next pro athlete!
5. **Academic Benefits.** Did you know that extracurricular activities can help improve grades, behavior, and work habits? It's true! Recent studies have shown a direct correlation between involvement in after-school activities and overall improvement in academic abilities and general behavior.
6. **They're FUN!** Whether it's a sport to keep them moving or an academic club to keep them on track, kids enjoy doing things they love with their friends. Every kid deserves to have fun doing something they enjoy!

It can be tricky trying to coordinate busy school schedules and put a healthy dinner on the table. This easy slow cooker recipe can be started before you head out the door in the morning, so you'll come home to a warm, satisfying meal you can ladle into bowls right away. If you do manage to have some leftovers, this soup can be stored in the fridge or frozen and saved for later.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound beef stew meat cut into 1" pieces
- 1 large red potato, cut into 1/2" pieces
- 1 package (1 lb) frozen mixed vegetables (corn, peas, green beans, carrots)
- 6 cups beef broth
- 1 can (14 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Optional: Pearl onions

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, combine and thoroughly mix the vegetables, tomatoes, salt, pepper, and basil.
2. In a 3-quart or larger slow cooker crock, layer the potatoes (and pearl onions, if using) along the bottom, then top with the mixed vegetables. Layer the meat across the top. Lastly, pour in the broth.
3. Cover and cook on HIGH for 3 1/2 to 4 hours or LOW for 6 to 7 hours, until meat is tender.
4. Once fully cooked, gently stir to mix the stew.
5. Garnish with fresh basil, if desired, and serve with crackers or sliced French bread.

Set to Impress: How to Set a Formal Table

Setting the table might seem like a simple and mundane task, but it doesn't have to be! Check out these tips to help you transform a simple dinner table setting into an elegant work of art that will make your get-togethers the talk of the town!

1. **Plates.** The first plate you'll set down is the dinner plate. This is the largest of all plates on the table, and should be centered in front of each chair.

If you plan on serving salad as one of your courses, place this smaller plate on top of your dinner plate. It might seem strange to put one plate on top of another, but the salad course is traditionally served first, meaning your salad plates will be out of the way before the dinner plate is used. Alternatively, soup bowls can replace the salad plates if soup will be served.
2. **Silverware.** Always set the silverware in the order it will be used, starting from the outside in. Forks go on the left, and knives and spoons go on the right. Start with the small salad fork as the furthest to the left, followed by the dinner fork next to the plates. Directly to the right of the plate, place knife and then the spoon. If soup is served, the soup spoon should be to the right of the dinner spoon.
3. **Napkin.** Fold a cloth napkin into a rectangle and place it to the left of your salad fork (not under them!). If you want to get really fancy, fold the napkin into a triangle and position it with the top point facing out to the left.
4. **Glasses.** Water glasses (without a stem) should be placed first and positioned directly above the knife. If additional beverages are being served, the stemmed glass goes up and to the left of the water glass.
5. **After dinner.** If tea or coffee will be served after dinner, place a teacup and saucer to the right of the spoon. Make sure to keep the cup right side up to easily pour the coffee or tea. Dessert dishes and silverware are typically brought out separately and do not need to be set at the start of the meal.

...Carpet Talk...

Prevent Color Loss

Just like any colored fabric, carpet can fade and lose its color if not properly cared for. Here are a few things you can do to prevent color loss in your carpet:

Keep Out the Sun! Too much direct sunlight will fade your carpeting. So when you're not in the room, pull the shades closed.

Keep Hands and Feet Clean! You may not realize it, but the chemicals and products you handle regularly can inadvertently stain your carpet. Bleach, acne medications, even athlete's foot medication can remove the color from your carpet. Make sure the members of your household wash their hands and keep socks on their feet.

Treat Pet Stains Immediately! If Fluffy or Fido has an accident on the carpet, clean it up as quickly as possible. Pet urine that is left on carpeting can cause permanent color loss.

Call the Professionals! Many stains on carpet become permanent color loss situations when consumer products are used incorrectly. These products can chemically "burn" or destroy carpet fibers in the process.

More importantly, certain stains require very specific treatments to properly remove the stain. Using the wrong type of chemical can permanently set the stain or destroy the fibers.

So when faced with tricky spots and stains, don't hesitate to give us a call!