

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



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Plants for Terrariums and Dish Gardens

Invented in 1836 by N. B. Ward and originally called "Wardian Cases," terrariums were used for transporting growing plants on long sea voyages. They provided the best and safest method of transporting potted and living plants across the ocean.

A true terrarium is an enclosed environment. When it is properly sited so it receives the correct light, it should be almost self-sustaining for at least a month, perhaps longer.

The terrarium can be a work of art when the proper materials are cleverly combined in an attractive container. It can also provide the opportunity to grow some of the delicate plants that would ordinarily dwindle rapidly when exposed to the dry atmosphere of the home. Some people grow cacti and other succulents in glass containers, but they will do better if left uncovered.

Design

1. Try to create a picture or replica of nature rather than just a collection of plants.
2. Select plants that will be in scale with the size of the terrarium.
3. Choose species that have similar culture requirements and are aesthetically compatible.
4. Plants that might grow too rapidly can be planted in their pots to slow growth.
5. Each terrarium should have a focal point: a stone, a striking plant or perhaps a ceramic figure.
6. A path into the vegetation can add interest and a bit of mystery.
7. Try to cover the soil because bare soil is not natural in moist environments. Low-spreading plants and mosses can be used.
8. Do not crowd your plants.

Soil

Soil from the garden is not good for terrariums. A good soil mix should be composed of 1/3 soil, 1/3 sand and 1/3 peat moss. Some houseplant mixes sold under various trade names are ideal. One tablespoon of water soluble houseplant food in dry form may be added to 2 pounds or 1 quart of soil mix. When you add soil to the terrarium, make sure it's no more than 1/5 the total volume of the terrarium. Since there are no drainage holes, some provision must be made for this. A layer of sand, small gravel or moss can be placed on the bottom for drainage.

Culture

- Closed terrariums can heat up rapidly. Give it good light, but not direct sun.
- Do not overwater. This is the number one problem encountered in terrarium maintenance. Water only when fogging stops or the plants become slightly wilted. Add water directly to the soil in small amounts over a day's time. Mist the foliage at the same time.
- Leave the cover off until water is no longer visible on the foliage, then replace the cover and check again for the proper amount of fogging. If the terrarium is properly watered when it is constructed, it may not require watering for almost a year.
- Fertilize infrequently.
- Some pruning or thinning of plants is necessary.
- Try breathing into the container occasionally to stimulate the plants with extra carbon dioxide.
- Remove faded flowers and dead leaves.
- Redesign occasionally. Don't be afraid to change the plants that aren't doing well.

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PLANTS FOR TERRARIUMS AND DISH GARDENS

The following are three lists of plants for use in the woodland, tropical and desert terrarium.

Woodland plant list

- Maidenhair Fern - *Adiantum pedatum*
- Mother Spleenwort - *Asplenium bulbiferum*
- Boxwood - *Buxus*
- Dwarf Hinoki Cypress - *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'nana'
- Pipsissewa - *Chimaphila Umbellata*
- Wintergreen - *Gaultheria procumbens*
- English Ivy (dwarf forms) - *Hedera helix*
- Liverwort - *Hepatica americana*
- Juniper - *Juniperus* sp.
- Ground Pine - *Lycopodium complanatum*
- Partridgeberry - *Mitchella repens*
- Plectranthus - *Plectranthus oertendahl*
- Shield Spike - *Polystichum* 'Braunii'
- Club Moss - *Selaginella* sp.
- Dwarf Yew - *Taxus media* var.
- Foam Flower - *Tiarella cordifolia*
- Piggyback Plant - *Tolmiea Menziesii*
- Canadian Hemlock, dwarf varieties - *Tsuga canadensis*
- Ilex sp. - *Ilex* (also Holly)

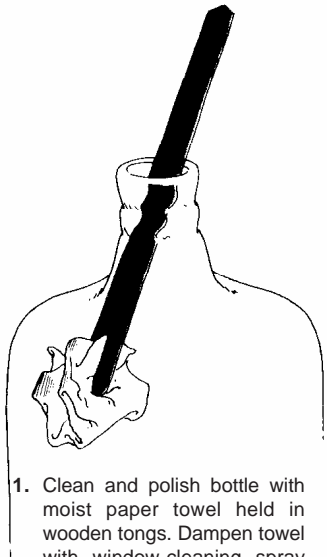
Tropical plant list

- Friendship plant - *Pilea involucreta*
- Nephthytis (Arrow Leaf Plant) - *Syngonium popdophyllum*
- Maidenhair Fern - *Adiantum pedatum*
- Norfolk Island Pine - *Araucaria heterophylla*
- Asparagus Fern - *Asparagus setaceus*
- Parlor Palm - *Chamaedorea elegans*
- Kangaroo Vine - *Cissus antarctica*
- Earth Star - *Cryptanthus*
- False Aralia - *Dizygotheca elegantissima*
- Dracaena - *Dracaena godseffiana* and *Dracaena sanderiana*
- Creeping Fig - *Ficus pumila*
- Nerve Plant - *Fittonia* sp.
- English Ivy (dwarf forms) - *Hedera helix* var.
- Prayer Plant - *Maranta* sp.
- Miniature Peperomia - *Peperomia* var.
- *Philodendron* var.
- Creeping Jenny - *Pilea depressa*
- Yew Podocarpus - *Podocarpus macrophyllus*
- Table or Brake Ferns - *Pteris* sp.
- African Violet - *Saintpaulia*
- Bird nest Sansevieria - *Sansevieria trifasciata* cv. 'Hahnii'
- Strawberry Geranium - *Saxifraga stolonifera*
- Pothos - *Epipremnum aureum*
- Spike Moss - *Selaginella* sp.
- Swedish Ivy - *Plectranthus australis*
- Creeping Charlie - *Pileanummulari*
- Wandering Jew - *Tripogandra multiflora*, *Zebrina pendula*, or *Tradescantia* sp.
- Grape ivy - *Cissus rhombifolia*
- Trailing Watermelon Begonia - *Pellionia* sp.
- Aluminum plant - *Pilea Cadierei*
- Baby Tears - *Helxine soleioli*
- Dwarf Myrtle - *Myrtus cummunis microphylla*
- Artillery fern - *Pilea microphylla*
- Croton - *Codiaeum variegatum*
- Moon Valley Pilea - *Pilea* 'Moon Valley'
- Neanthe Bella Palm - *Chamaedorea elegans*
- 'Neanthe Bella'

Cacti and succulent plant list

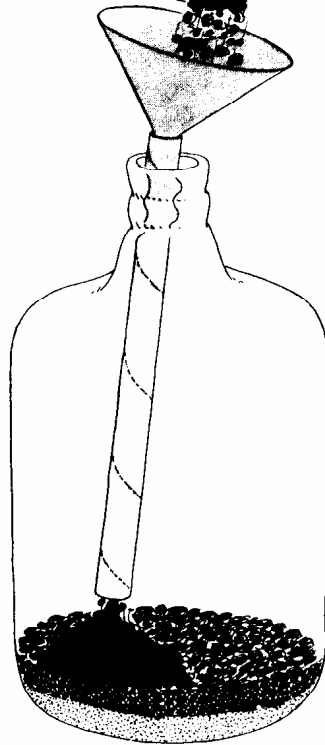
- Dwarf Century Plant - *Agave pumila*
- Old Man Cactus - *Cephalocereus senilis*
- Peanut Cactus - *Lobivia silvestrii*
- Cone Plant - *Conophytum* sp.
- Rattail Crassula - *Crassula lycopodiodes* 'Maki'
- Propeller Plant - *Crassula falcata*
- Rattlesnake Crassula - *Crassula teres*
- Barrel Cactus - *Echinocactus Grusonii*
- Plain Cactus - *Gymnocalycium mihanovichii*
- Window Haworthia - *Haworthia cymbiformis*
- Zebra Haworthia - *Haworthia fasciata*
- Panda Plant - *Kalanchoe tomentosa*
- Living Stones - *Lithops* sp.
- Golden Star Cactus - *Mammillaria elongata*
- Bunny ears - *Opuntia microdasys*
- Crown Cactus - *Rebutia Kupperiana*
- Coral Beads Plant - *Sedum Stahlia*
- Hen and Chicks - *Sempervivum soboliferum*
- Aeonium arboreum - *Aeonium*
- Bishop's Cap - *Astrophytum* sp.
- Tom Thumb cactus - *Parodia aureispina*
- Medicinal Aloe - *Aloe barbadensis* (*Aloe vera*)
- Crested Euphorbia - *Euphorbia lactea* 'cristata'
- Devil's Backbone - *Pedilanthus tithymaloides*
- Jade plant - *Crassula ovata*
- Chandelier plant - *Kalanchoe tubiflora*
- Air plant - *Kalanchoe pinnata*
- Ghost plant - *Graptopetalum paraguayense*

How to Plant a Bottle Garden

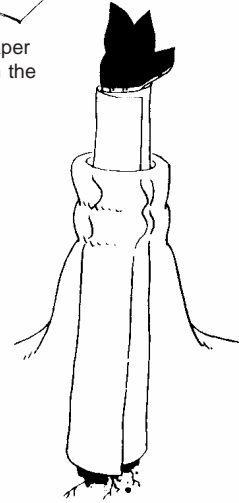


1. Clean and polish bottle with moist paper towel held in wooden tongs. Dampen towel with window-cleaning spray to remove stains. Let dry before planting.

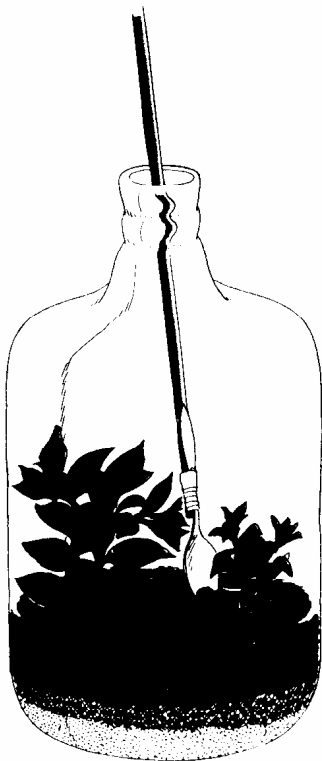
2. Add 1" layers of sand and charcoal chips - then a few inches of potting soil using a funnel and paper tube extension to help keep dust down and off sides of bottle.



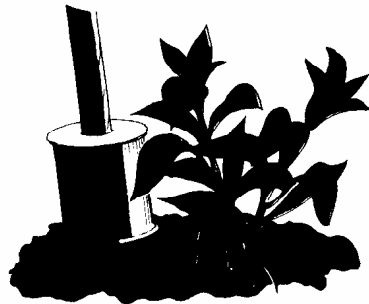
3. Roll larger, leafy plants in paper cylinder to slip them through the neck without damage.



4. Use wooden tongs to lower small plants through the neck and to maneuver all plants into position.

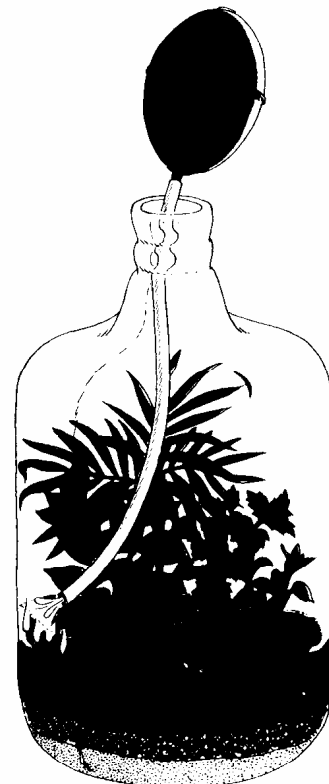
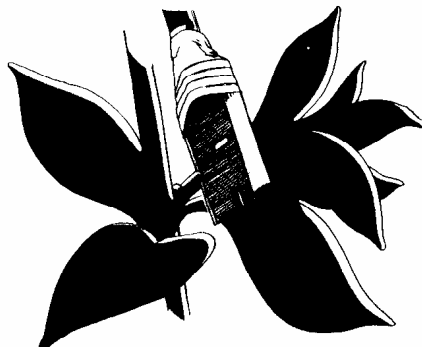


5. A spoon taped to a stick is great for digging planting holes, positioning plants, covering roots and shaping the terrain.



6. A spool on a stick can be used to tamp and firm soil.

7. Shaping and pruning can be done with a razor blade taped to a stick. Pick up prunings with tongs.



8. Use a bulb syringe to wash sides of glass, water roots into place and settle soil. Use it dry to blow dust and soil particles off glass or leaves.