

LIFE IN A BOTTLE

The world's longest-living terrarium was planted in 1960. It hasn't been watered since 1972.

2 Make a terrific terrarium

Create a mini ecosystem in a bottle.

What you need

- Glass container with cork stopper
- Gravel
- Teaspoon
- 2 tsp activated charcoal
- Potting soil
- Chopsticks
- 2 small plants
- Water spray bottle

How does it work?

The plants in a terrarium rely on photosynthesis (the process by which green plants use sunlight to make food) to survive. The glass container sets up a mini water cycle like the water cycle in nature, where rainwater gets constantly recycled. Sunlight enters the terrarium, heating the air and soil inside. The heat causes the water to evaporate (turn from a liquid into a gas). Once it hits the cool glass, the vapour condenses (turns back into water) and drips back down onto the soil, allowing the plants to receive it again. With the right balance, the plants inside a terrarium can survive for years without ever needing to be watered. Activated charcoal is the magic ingredient that absorbs smells and stops a build-up of bacteria.



1 Add a layer of gravel, about 2cm deep, to the glass container.



2 Next, sprinkle two teaspoons of activated charcoal over the gravel layer.



3 Add a layer of potting soil, 3cm deep, on top of the charcoal.



4 Use chopsticks to poke holes in the soil and gently push in your plants.



5 Add some pieces of moss and spray your plants with a few drops of water (but do not soak).



6 Decorate your terrarium with small ornaments or interesting stones. Put the stopper on the jar.