

A terrarium in a jam jar

How to make your very own ecosystem in a jar

First of all **select your jam jar**

Then add a **layer of small stones** about 1 - 2 cm in the bottom of the jar this is for drainage

Next you need a **small sprinkle of activated charcoal** over the stones to filter the water and keep the ecosystem fresh and odour-free.

Add soil, about 2.5cm of nutrient-rich potting soil.

You are aiming for 1/3 of the jar to be filled and 2/3 of the jar to be air.

Now you can **add a plant**, use the sticks to help to gently place the plant in the soil.

Add some **decoration** and **then a few sprays of water** to make the soil damp. Just enough to dampen the soil without creating standing puddles at the bottom.

Put the lid on tightly and place your jar somewhere sunny but not on a window ledge or in direct sunlight or it will get too hot and your plant will be cooked!

Terrariums should be sealed and only opened every now and then.

Reasons to open may be excessive moisture, too much water might cause mould to grow. Just leave the lid off for a few days until it has dried out a bit.

You may need to add a little extra water during hot times of the year. If its looking a little dry just add a few extra sprays of water and re-seal.

The first terrarium

The Wardian case was an early form of a terrarium.

Famously, it was discovered by accident.

Dr Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, a keen amateur naturalist, collected a moth cocoon in a sealed glass bottle along with some fern leaves and soil and left it for three years.

The plant started to sprout and grow in a little microcosm of its tropical environment, proving that plants could survive without watering in a closed glass case.

Ward built a glass box to help transport live plants across the world, testing it in 1833 on a journey between London and Sydney.

This Wardian case transformed botanical exploration, enabling collectors to safely send specimens back to the UK.