

## Make a Desktop Desert Terrarium

Terrariums are a great way to grow plants that need high humidity. But what do you do if you want a cactus terrarium? Using a glass fishbowl, you and your kids can create a low-humidity, open-topped terrarium perfect for drought-tolerant succulents. Succulents make great plants for kids because they're easy to care for, only needing a quick spritz from a water bottle every so often.

What are succulents? Desert plant life is largely made up of succulents, plants with thick, often waxy skin. They can survive the dry desert climate because they retain water well, storing it in their leaves, stems, and even roots. One of the best known succulents is the cactus, recognizable by its prickly spines. Succulents come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and textures.



### What You Need:

- Fish bowl or other open-topped container
- 2-3 small succulent plants (visit a nursery with your child and let him pick out the plants he likes)
- Gravel
- Sand
- Tongs
- Spoon

### What You Do:

1. Help your child place a layer of gravel in the bottom of the fish bowl. This will help keep the roots dry if the terrarium is over-watered. Remind your child that it rains very little in the desert.
2. Cover the rock layer with about one inch of sand.
3. Have him use the spoon to scoop out a hole in the sand. (It doesn't have to be deep because desert plants have shallow roots to absorb rain quickly before it evaporates.)
4. Now add the plants to the terrarium, one at a time. Thornless succulents are easy to transplant, but handle cacti gently with a pair of tongs. It may take several tries to get the plants to stay upright because of their shallow roots.

Once everything is in the terrarium, find a sunny desk or dresser top for it. Don't forget to use a spray bottle to water them once or twice a week—even deserts have rain once in a while.