

❧ Make Your Own Terrarium ❧

It wasn't just people and animals that travelled on the SS Great Britain, the ship also carried lots of plants and seeds.



Wardian Case

During the Victorian era there was a high demand for plants from other countries. While seeds could be transported in the hold of a ship, plants need light and water to survive. Keeping them alive on a long journey across oceans was tricky, especially with fresh water in limited supply.

The solution was to transport plants in Wardian Cases. Invented by doctor and amateur naturalist Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward in 1829, these wooden and glass trunks created micro-climates that would keep plants alive for months and sometimes longer. Plants, in pots, would be put inside the case, given some water and then the case was closed and placed on the top deck of the ship.

Once inside, the plants would only need to be watered once on the 2-month voyage. This allowed plants to be transported on ships including the SS Great Britain, with British plants, going to Australia, and Australian plants coming back the other way.

A glass terrarium works in a similar way to a Wardian Case, with soil for nutrients, a little water and sunshine it can keep a plant alive for months without you needing to remember to water it. Now it's your turn to create your own!



You Will Need:

- A glass jar with a screw on lid – e.g. empty jam jar
- Soil
- Handful of small pebbles or gravel
- Water
- Small Seed Packet – wildflower seeds work well

What to do:

1. Place a small handful of pebbles at the bottom of the jar
2. Then fill about a quarter of the jar with soil.
3. Sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil.
4. Add in a little more soil to just cover the seeds.
5. Water to dampen the soil inside the jar then put the lid on.
6. Place on a windowsill that ideally gets a bit of sunlight during the day.
7. After a few days you should start to see your seeds growing!



If you are feeling more adventurous, you could swap the seeds for a small, slow-growing indoor houseplant, they also grow well in a terrarium!