

What is a Terrarium or Vivarium?

Serving the terrarium hobby since 1994!



A terrarium is an enclosed glass or plastic container designed to replicate a specific microclimate, typically for plants. When designed with animals in mind, it's referred to as a vivarium, which often houses reptiles, amphibians, or even insects. These enclosed environments range from simple glass aquariums to complex ecosystems controlled by technology, mimicking natural weather patterns like thunderstorms.

If you've ever visited a zoo with intricate reptile or amphibian enclosures, you've seen a vivarium in action. But terrariums and vivariums aren't limited to zoos—they're becoming increasingly popular for home and office use.



A Brief History of Terrariums and Vivariums

The terrarium as we know it originated in the early 1800s. Dr. Nathaniel Ward developed the "Wardian case," a glass container that allowed plants like ferns and orchids to thrive despite London's polluted air. These miniature greenhouses gained popularity in Victorian England and later in the United States, bringing nature indoors and offering a stable, humid environment for plants.

In modern times, terrariums have evolved into vivariums that include live animals alongside tropical plants. Hobbyists have refined techniques to recreate the intricate ecosystems of rainforests, making it possible to keep exotic species like dart frogs and tiny orchids thriving indoors.

Modern Terrarium and Vivarium Designs

Terrariums today can be simple or elaborate, depending on the hobbyist's goals. Some are designed purely for plants, featuring tropical species like African violets or epiphytic orchids, while others combine flora and fauna to mimic a rainforest environment.

Key advancements in the hobby include:

Lighting: Compact fluorescent and LED lights have revolutionized smaller tank setups, providing better lighting options.

Ventilation: Fans ensure proper airflow to prevent mold and maintain a healthy environment.

Misting Systems: Automated misting replicates natural rainforest conditions, keeping humidity levels stable.

Whether your interest lies in cultivating rare plants or housing dart frogs and tree frogs, modern terrariums and vivariums offer endless opportunities to recreate nature indoors.

The Popularity of Terrariums and Vivariums Today

In recent years, the terrarium and vivarium hobby has gained momentum in the United States. Advances in product availability and care knowledge have fueled a growing interest in these micro-ecosystems. Europe, long considered a leader in this field, has influenced many of the trends adopted by American hobbyists.

From basic setups to custom-built masterpieces, terrariums now offer something for everyone. They bring a touch of the wild into homes, offices, zoos, and museums, fostering a deeper connection to nature.

Bring Nature Indoors with Saurian Enterprises

At Saurian Enterprises, we specialize in helping hobbyists create their dream terrariums and vivariums. Whether you're looking for supplies to build your own or seeking custom fabrication for larger enclosures, we have what you need. Explore our selection of terrarium supplies or contact us for custom solutions tailored to your space.