

ENCLOSED ORCHIDS: GROWING IN WARDIAN CASES AND TERRARIUMS

In 1829, Dr. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward performed an experiment which led him to discover, quite by accident, that plants could survive with minimal care under glass. During the Victorian era, glass enclosures made for the growing of plants, known as Wardian cases, were used in homes and on transoceanic voyages— wherever conditions for growing plants was not optimal. The Wardian case was the forerunner of today's soda-bottle terrariums, aquariums, and high-tech growing chambers.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Glass or plastic terrariums or aquariums
- Fluorescent “grow” lights if you want to grow a wider range of orchids
- A small fan to insure adequate air movement (e.g., a computer fan)
- More sophisticated orchid terrariums are available with lights, temperature control, and fan included.

GROWING GUIDE

- Be sure to choose orchids that perform well in the high humidity of a terrarium.
- Make sure the terrarium cover is not fully sealed.
- Use a small fan to keep the air moving.
- Place your terrarium in bright, indirect light.
- Double-check temperature and air movement during the warm season.
- Plants grown in humid conditions don't require frequent watering.

ORCHIDS TO GROW

Miniature or compact orchids that like high humidity generally do best in terrariums: *Paphiopedilum* (slipper orchids); miniature *Phalaenopsis* (moth orchids); *Masdevallia* and other Pleurothallids; jewel orchids (grown for the beautiful foliage); miniature *Angraecum* species and hybrids

TIP

Pot your orchids individually and create a miniature landscape by sinking the pots into the soil in the bottom of your terrarium. Moss, or other tropical foliage plants planted directly into the soil, can be used to disguise the pots. This will allow you to rearrange and repot your orchids easily.

Your local orchid society is usually the best place to gain important information on which varieties do well in your area. For more information visit the National Capital Orchid Society at www.ncos.us. The information on these signs can be downloaded from www.usbg.gov.

