

The Everglades: Making Your Own Terrarium

Everglades National Park is considered one of the most severely infested parks in terms of exotic plants. Some of the many introduced plant species are considered to be a serious long-term threat to the Everglades ecosystem. Invasive exotic animal species have invaded Florida in recent years. **Invasive species** have the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside their natural range, sometimes at the ecological expense of native animal species, and often at the financial expense of humans.

The Everglades are under attack from these exotic species. **Exotic** (a.k.a. nonnative, foreign, or alien) species are those that live outside their native range and arrived there by human activity, either deliberate or accidental. They steal oxygen and light from other native plants and force them out of their natural habitat. To help raise awareness for conservation and the importance of our National Parks such as the Everglades, we will create our own terrariums. A **Terrarium** is a sealable case or container for smaller animals or plants to live or grow.

YOU WILL NEED

- Recycled plastic or glass container
- Objects found outside

STEPS

1. Choose the type of environment you would like to create inside your terrarium: wetlands, desert, rain forest, polar, etc.
2. Go for a walk outside to see if you can find some nature to take back with you and put into your terrarium, such as flowers, rocks, moss, grass, water, bugs, etc.
3. Observe what you brought back and begin to create your terrarium!
4. Lay the moss, grass, rocks, twigs or add water you have collected in your plastic or glass container to create the atmosphere of the environment you chose.
5. Once your environment is complete, you can add whichever bugs, plants or flowers that will thrive within your environment, if you wish.
6. How can you make a difference and help protect and conserve the resources around you? Research animals found in wetlands, or other environments. How do these non-native animals affect ecosystems such as the Everglades?

