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Raise a Rain Forest

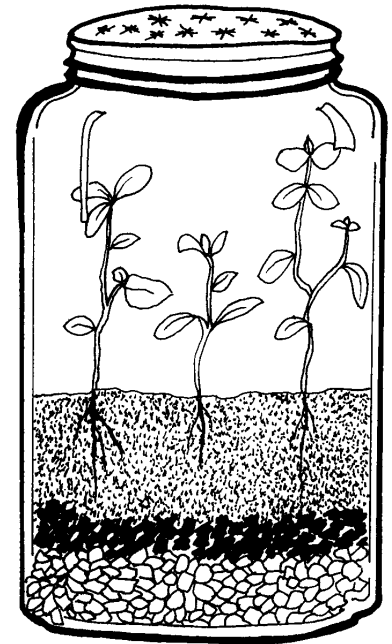
Activity

Using these simple materials, you can make your own miniature rain forest and observe how it creates its own “rain.”

Materials:

- clean, dry glass jar with lid (for example, a mayonnaise jar)
- potting soil
- gravel
- charcoal (the kind you would use in an aquarium)
- small rain forest plants or mosses (for example: prayer plant, philodendron, aluminum plant, begonia, peperomia, artillery plant)
- spoon

The air inside the jar gets recycled as the plants absorb the carbon dioxide and give off oxygen during the day. At night, the plants turn the oxygen back into carbon dioxide. The plants also recycle water by absorbing water from the soil and sending it up into the leaves. The leaves send the water back into the air as vapor. The water vapors turn into water droplets in the closed jar. It “rains” over and over again as the water droplets trickle back into the soil. Enjoy watching your own mini rain forest in action.



Directions:

1. Spread a layer of gravel on the bottom of the empty jar.
2. Add a layer of charcoal to the jar.
3. Add approximately 2 inches (5 cm) of soil.
4. Place the plants in the soil, making sure the roots are covered.
5. Water the soil to dampen. Do not soak.
6. Place the lid on the jar and keep it out of direct sunlight.
7. Jar lids may be decorated.

Challenge:

- Draw a diagram of your miniature rain forest. Show the various steps in the “rain” cycle and label the contents of the rain forest jar.
- As you observe the “rain” cycle in your miniature rain forest, keep a daily journal. Write entries about the changes you see occurring.

Are You Using Up Our Rain Forests?

The American consumer uses many products from the rain forest. Some are replenishable resources while others are not. Many of the products we use come from trees. Although it is true that not all paper products originate in the tropical rain forests, many do.

Activity

Try the following experiment to demonstrate the use of forest products by the American consumer.

Materials:

- plastic trash bags (one per student)
- bathroom scale

Activity:

1. Each student receives a plastic bag to collect all the paper that would normally be thrown away in one day at home.
2. The teacher should use one bag to collect all the paper that would normally be thrown away in the classroom in one day.
3. The bags should be weighed at the end of a 24-hour period. This figure can be used as the average paper waste for one day.
4. Calculate how much paper one family discards during a week, a month, a year.
5. The current population of the United States is about 240 million. Calculate the amount of paper discarded by the population each week, month, and year.
 - How does this information relate to the deforestation of the tropical rain forests?
 - Do you feel that you could use less paper? How?
 - How could the average American use less paper?
 - How does your family's paper consumption compare to other people's in your class?
 - How does your class's paper consumption compare to other classes' consumption?

