

The Evergreen Jewel of the Forest



OBJECTIVES

Educational components

Participants will learn the environments of four types of moss found in Arkansas.

Moss benefits: In the forest, moss slows down the flow of and retains water. It helps prevent erosion. It keeps tree seeds from washing away and provides an ideal condition for seed germination.

Participants will learn how to use moss to beautify their homes and gardens. They will learn how to collect moss in nature while giving respect to the environment. Moss is the evergreen jewel of the forest and should be left intact in areas where others might enjoy it.

Moss: The Evergreen Jewel of the Forest

Takeaways

Participants will leave the room with an attractive, low maintenance plant in a unique container and instructions for plant care.

MATERIALS:

Potting mix

12 clear containers about 4" by 4"

(repurposed pillar candle holders from the dollar store)

River rocks or pebbles for drainage (for a depth of about 3/4 inch)

A container of Arkansas rocks for decoration

(or purchased river rocks larger than drainage rocks)

Green carpet moss

12 moisture-loving plants (6-pack size)

Why 12? One for an example, one for demonstration, 10 for possible participants.)

Samples of 4 types of moss will be provided at each table for participants to look at and touch during the introductory part of the demonstration.

4 bags of stones and 12 containers cost \$16 plus tax. The plant cost varies on season, but small plants were needed here. Moss and rocks were collected from Arkansas forests.

Checklist of materials do you need to do the presentation.

☐ Pens

☒ Markers

☒ Dishpans for soil (2 available in BRI supply cabinet)

☐ Watering cans (2 available in BRI supply cabinet)

☒ Name tags for participants (check BRI supply cabinet)

☒ Example of completed project you're doing

☒ An extra set of the participant project materials listed above in order for you to demonstrate the project.

☒ Completed presentation forms (1 to BRI and 1 mailed to ext. office)

☒ Your clean receipts for materials purchased (give to BRI therapists)

☒ Other A completed project to demonstrate the desired end result

Also provide plastic water bottles for easy watering and plastic spoons and small scoops to place soil in the small spaces.

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STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESENTATION

Tips for any presentation

1. Plan well in advance of presentation day and make the needed purchases.
2. Practice the activity prior to presentation day and bring a completed sample to the presentation.
3. Distribute all materials needed to each table, take into account there may be 10 participants. (ie: Paper plates to work on, plates of moss for each participant, containers of Arkansas rocks and containers holding just enough plants for each table.) Maintain a set of materials for you to use in the demonstration.
4. **Keep materials on presentation side of table until the activity has been explained and all are ready to begin activity.**

Tips:

For this project, it was essential to pour the river rocks into the containers in advance. It was the only way to know all the containers would have the same quantity.

Small scoopers or plastic spoons for soil placement will help keep the green side of the moss cleaner.

Step-by-step Activity

Participants will be given a glass container with small river rocks in the bottom.

Participants will be asked to:

1. Spill the river rocks onto a paper plate and select a special stone as a decorative topping to the planting and pour the remaining stones back into the container.
2. Participants can also choose from a collection of Arkansas rocks.
3. Participants will tear the light-weight carpet moss into a size to cover the inside walls of the container and place it with the green side facing out. Moss should rest above the river rocks and against the glass.
4. Scoop and pour about an inch depth of potting soil and pat it down firmly.
5. Choose plants from those on plates on each table.
6. Determine if more soil is needed before placing the plant.
7. Gently place the plants in position and fill container with potting soil. The top of the soil should be at the same level as previously potted.
8. Water lightly and add soil to bring the level back to previous.
9. Decorative stones can be placed to top the planting.
10. Water plant if needed.

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MAINTENANCE

Water sparingly since the container has no drain. There should be little water in the bottom of the container. To test if the plant needs water, gently press your finger against the top of the soil. If the soil sticks to your finger, you probably don't need to water it. Be aware of the plant signaling for water. Yellowing leaves may mean too much water or not enough light.

When roots are prevalent among the drainage stones, move the plant to a larger pot. Place in a bright area according to the tag in the plant.

MOSS FACTS

Mosses are survivors. They survive drought and drowning. They live in sidewalk cracks, under pine needles, on sunny and shady hillsides and under water in lakes and creeks. Mosses were among the first land plants. They get their nutrients from dust and moisture in the air and from rainfall.

They are the evergreen jewels that flourish in the damp forests on living trees and fallen branches. They grow on rocks with seemingly no tether. If the conditions are right, they will grow on compact clay. They have no root to speak of, only rhizomes. Rhizomes are horizontal stems that put out lateral stems. So mosses doesn't damage the trees they grow on.

Moss gardening has become popular in America. People saw it being used artfully in Japanese gardens to create a place of tranquility. The many species and growth forms of moss provide a variety of colors and texture. Moss can be ordered online or in stores in a variety that fits your purpose.

Many homeowners are grateful for the popularity of moss, since some locations and soil types simply will not support lawn grass. Transplanted to residential areas, moss can withstand even drought conditions. It will go dormant until the moisture comes back.

If you choose to collect moss from the forest, first look for upturned pieces of moss on the ground. Moss falls from the trees or becomes turned over by wildlife. If you don't find what you want lying loose on the ground, go deep into the woods to dig. Never disrupt moss in a public area like a path. Let the next visitor be just as in awe as you were when you discovered the moss.

95% of all mosses fall into the Bryophytes class. That's about 12,000 species. We are going to look at three species of Bryophytes and use one in our project. We are also going to look at a Sphagnum moss that is commonly called peat moss. You may think of peat moss as a product of Scotland - brings to mind a "bog" and great blocks taken from wetlands. But the moss we hold today was found in a forest in Arkansas. It's one of almost 400 species of Sphagnum known as peat moss.

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Found in nature, there are usually many species of moss in a single location. Moss reproduces by spores and sometimes the species coexist in a single clump.

We are going to look at two types of moss from a lake area – cushion and broom moss, and two from a forest – carpet (fern) moss and Sphagnum. The carpet moss provides a delicate decorative element to our project.

HANDOUT:

A handout is available. Content includes background on Master Gardeners. It identifies four types of moss in photos and shows other moss projects and the website info for UAEX.

SOURCES:

StateByStateGardening.com

Anps.org (Arkansas Native Plant Society)

DiscoverLife.org

Types of Moss Found in Arkansas



Broom Moss above. Cushion Moss below.

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Fern Moss

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Fun At-Home Activities

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Mixed moss types make an interesting centerpiece in this clear bowl.

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Aquarium pebbles, a tree branch and 2 types of moss make up this tiny tree-scape.

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Moss serves to contain water when used as a topper for thirsty potted plants.

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Paint with Moss

Moss painting can give an antique look to a clay pot or cement statue or write a word on a cement wall. You can even pour it where you want moss to grow.

Put your project in places moss already likes to grow – shade!

Use the recipe below to create your “paint.” Be sure to mist your paint job and keep it damp until the green growth starts to show.

NOTE: The best moss for this project is “city” moss – the moss that grows in sidewalk cracks, parking lot edges and even on asphalt streets.

Moss Paint Recipe

1 palm-size clump of moss (remove as much soil as possible)

1 cup buttermilk or plain yogurt

1 cup water

Blend ingredients using puree setting until it is a green slurry. Paint it. Pour it. Enjoy!

All photography was taken by Dana Rogers. Permission is granted to any Master Gardener to use for educational purposes only.

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Master Gardener Mission Statement

As horticultural trained volunteers, Master Gardeners extend research-based information through demonstration and educational programs using horticulture best practices, strengthening communities and families throughout Arkansas.

Arkansas Master Gardener Program Facts

Started In 1988 In 4 counties (Garland, Jefferson, Pulaski, and Saline) and 40 members, the Arkansas Master Gardener Program now:

- has over 3400 volunteers in 67 counties
- reported 94,767 education hours and 170,301 service hours in 2017
- operates in 65 Arkansas counties
- coordinates over 20 county and regional horticultural fairs annually

Master Gardeners is a program of



Moss Projects



Moss often maintains its color for months without water, making it an ideal floral addition to interiors. It also holds moisture when placed over soil in a planting or used as a liner as shown above.



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Pulaski County Master Gardeners



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They are evergreen jewels that flourish in damp forests. They live on living trees without harming them. They thrive in the acidic atmosphere of fallen branches. They grow on rocks with seemingly no tether. If the conditions are right, they will grow on compact clay. They have no root to speak of, only rhizomes – horizontal stems that put out lateral stems.

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Carpet or fern moss (above) is used as an absorbent liner in our potting container (left).



Broom moss comes in a variety top textures. (See moss in bowl on the back cover.)

Sphagnum moss (below) may hold 16–26 times as much water as their dry weight depending on the variety.



Cushion moss (above) has an almost domes underside

Broom moss (below) is aptly named

