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# Sphagnum Topiary

Creating an outdoor sphagnum topiary is almost exactly the same as creating an indoor sphagnum-stuffed topiary. The plant materials used are often different and topiaries can be a bit bigger but the technique is very much the same. In addition, sphagnum topiaries are also much quicker to produce than shrub topiaries.

## Objectives

- Create a stuffed outdoor topiary.
- Explore shapes and plants to create a unique living sculpture.

## Materials

- Wire frame
- Sphagnum moss
- Plants (choose plugs if they're available)
- Microfilament (fishing line)
- Hair pins
- Scissors
- A wooden dibble or screw driver
- Access to water

## Time Required

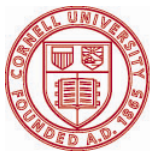
Two to four hours

## Directions

The great thing about sphagnum topiary is the results are quick. When you're finished you'll have a good idea of how your topiary will look in its mature form. Access to water and a sturdy frame are important, as the plants will have no roots in the ground. Choose vining or compact plants. Sometimes the best results are obtained by combining different plants to reveal different colors or textures of a shape like an animal or person.

1. Select a frame. These are often available at garden centers and craft stores as well as many online retailers. Frames also come in all different sizes so select what suits your needs the best.
2. Soak the sphagnum moss until completely saturated.

3. Stuff the frame by packing the wet sphagnum very tightly. When you think the frame is full, add more. If your frame has extremities like legs or a tail, start with them first and then move into the bigger areas of the frame. You want your frame very full, to the point where you can't quite see the frame anymore but can feel it under a layer of the sphagnum.
4. Use the microfilament the tightly wrap sections of the frame. Start by tying one end to the frame, wrapping tightly and evenly (you don't want to be able to see the microfilament so space it accordingly) then tying the other end off to the frame as well.
5. Take a step back and see how things are looking. You can use scissors to trim any sphagnum that seems to be sticking way out of place.
6. Have all your plants ready to go and well watered before you start planting. You may want to strategize and mark with a toothpick where you anticipate planting.
7. Using a wooden dribble or screwdriver, make a one planting hole. You'll have to push hard. Be ready to plant, as the moss will fill back in quickly.
8. Place the plant plugs into the planting holes securely. Cover the exposed soil with the moss.
9. If using vining plants, extend the runners along the surface of the moss and use hair pins to secure. If kept moist, these stems will root into the moss.
10. Be sure to place the topiary where it will get adequate sunlight. Check everyday for water. You can spray gently with a hose or spray bottle or if small enough, submerge in a pail of water. Never let your topiary dry out.
11. Because the sphagnum moss doesn't provide the plants with any nutrients, you'll need to fertilize every other week during the growing season and about once a month in the winter. Use a diluted liquid fertilizer after watering.
12. Continue to prune and pin trailing vines as needed to maintain shape and encourage the topiary to fill in.



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