

How to Plant and Care for your Animal Topiary

Written by RSF

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Animal Topiary How To

Animals with No Plants

These do not need to be watered. The moss is the “soil” in your topiary and it will not “grow” on its own. In fact, it is best if you keep the moss dry until you are ready to plant due to the fact that the moss has an amazing water retention quality and it may start to rot if there are no plants to utilize the water. However, you may choose not to plant your topiary at all.

Which Plants

Plant Texture: Take a few moments to look at your animal, then look for plants, which best represent it. (fur, feathers, mane; smooth fluffy, scaly.) Picture your animal dressed in plants. Don't forget the details: whiskers in kittens, stripes for bees, eye lashes on your giraffe. Plant color can create a pattern in your animal.

Scale: Smaller leafed plants work best on smaller animals. The idea is to compliment, not overwhelm the form.

Culture: It is best to use plants that like the same conditions. We tend to use succulents, which are drought tolerant. Rock garden type plants, which are invasive and low growing, make great topiary plants.

How to Plant

1. Soak the moss filled form in water and let drain
2. If you have “cell pack” sized plants (3/4” to 1 1/2”) you can poke a hole into the damp moss from the outside of the form and insert the plant plug.
3. Leave at least 2 inches between the plants, as they will fill in (depending on the plants).

To Water

1. Keep your animal well watered
2. Place in a shady location (to avoid it getting too dried out in the full sun)
3. Trim the plants as needed throughout the summer to maintain the animal shape.
4. Check for water daily. Double-check the smaller parts of your topiary, as they will need more water.
5. Fertilize every other week with a balanced 20-20-20 fertilizer.

Reminder: The ideal location for your topiary is in mostly shade.

This will help prevent the plants on the topiary from getting too dried out. The smaller parts, arms, legs, etc. will dry out fastest.

If your topiary is all succulents, it can tolerate more sun and dryness.

If the animal does dry out completely during the summer, be certain to soak in all the way through. Place in a tub or water several times to re-wet it all the way through the body.

For the Winter

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1. Let the animal dry out (unless you have the ideal winter location and the ability to water your animal, it is not a year round plant in Michigan)
2. Remove the dead plants
3. Keep the moss in the animal (this can be reused)
4. Store the frame in a dry place for the winter