

BUILD A MINI WETLAND

Wetlands act like nature's sponge; they soak up water, filter pollution, and provide homes for wildlife. In this activity, you'll make a small wetland model to see how water moves and how plants and soil help clean it.

Materials

- 1 clear plastic container or wide cup
- Soil or sand
- Small rocks or pebbles
- Grass, moss, or a leafy plant clipping
- Cup of water
- Spoon

Fun Fact

South Carolina's coastal salt marshes are some of the most productive ecosystems on Earth—providing food, shelter, and protection for hundreds of species!

Instructions

1. **Layer the base:** Put rocks or pebbles at the bottom of your container.
2. **Add soil:** Spoon soil or sand on top of the rocks to make a "ground layer."
3. **Plant it:** Place a bit of moss, grass, or a small clipping in the soil.
4. **Test the water:** Slowly pour water into your wetland. Watch how it filters through the soil and rocks before pooling at the bottom.
5. **Observe:** Notice how the soil holds some water, the rocks let it drain, and the plant helps keep it in place. Record your observations below.

Explore Further

- Try pouring water with a little food coloring—does the soil help filter it?
- Compare what happens if you pour water into plain soil versus your wetland model.
- Talk as a family: How do real wetlands protect towns from flooding and keep rivers healthy?