Create a trendy terrarium

Cheryl Maddocks

FASHION goes in cycles, in greenery as much as clothes. One of the latest indoor plant trends revisits a very old one. Terrariums, which have been around for centuries, have become popular in chic households.

There is something magical about a terrarium. The idea of a small, enclosed, self-contained indoor garden world is intriguing. And these fascinating environments can be created from any container - plastic or glass - with a transparent lid.

But how do terrariums work?

In the late 1820s, Englishman Dr Nathaniel Ward discovered some plants could flourish indefinitely in covered glass containers. Ward, who studied moths and caterpillars, was experimenting with a cocoon in a covered jar when he found a fern had grown in the soil at the jar’s base. He then invented a glass container that became known as the Wardian case. This was the earliest terrarium and became very fashionable, appearing in many Victorian households. Botanists also used the cases on sea voyages to protect sensitive tropical plants from salt air and changing climatic conditions during travel.

Terrariums are ideal for today’s lifestyle. Air conditioning and central heating make homes comfortable for people, but conditions are not so suitable for plants. Terrariums create the humidity required for indoor cultivation. They are also perfect for the time-poor and forgetful, as a sealed terrarium will not need watering for months.

Some containers, such as large glass bottles, fish bowls or funky-looking vases, are another option. While they still provide high humidity, it’s not as high as that of enclosed terrariums, so they need more regular watering.

To create a terrarium, add a two-and-a-half centimetre layer of gravel or small pebbles to the bottom of the container. Cover this with a layer of activated charcoal (available from pet shops) to stop the potting mix going sour. Place a light layer of sphagnum moss over the charcoal to prevent the potting mix from sinking into the drainage area.

Next add a layer of potting mix. Depending on the container size, you will need a minimum thickness of four centimetres. You can reduce the root ball of a plant by nearly half, as it will survive in the perpetually moist atmosphere.

After planting, mist spray to clean any potting mix off the leaves or sides of the container. This will be enough to provide moisture and settle the potting mix. Keep the container uncovered until the leaves are completely dry. Put the terrarium in a brightly lit spot, but not in direct sunlight.

Many plants are suitable for terrariums. Moisture-loving house plants from tropical regions are perfect. Choose plants that have similar temperature, light and water requirements. African violets, Fittonia, Peperomia, Fleea, Syngoniums, Begonias, crotons, Calathea, Dracaena, ferns, some orchids and the polka dot plant or freckle face (Hypoestes) all work well.

Baby’s tears (Soleirella soleirolii) or moss may be used as a ground cover.

Candid insight into a tough champion

Adrian Morley

MOZ, My Story
By Adrian Morley
RRP: $32.95

WHEN most Australian rugby league followers think of Adrian Morley, what comes to mind is the hard-hitting Englishman who was sent off 12 seconds into a Test match against the Kangaroos after Corporate Blue Kearns.

He won a premiership with the Roosters, and also spent a fair deal of time on the sidelines due to injury and suspension.

He was tough, never shied away from a contest and went alright for a ‘Pomme bastard’.

But, as it turns out, there is much more to Adrian Morley – for one thing, he knows how to write.

Moz, My Story is Morley’s newly-released autobiography, and it is not only amusing and entertaining, but one of the best stories of a rugby league player you are likely to read.

Just as he put little punches on the field, the same can be said of Moz, My Story. Morley is completely honest, does not try to make excuses and is not afraid to cast a critical eye over his actions.

Just as he wasted no time getting stuck into a game when he ran out onto the field in a Roosters, Great Britain, Leeds or Warrington jumper, his story hocks you from the start.

“Covering in a ditch, covered in mud, my eyes stinging from the caustic spray, which had been sprayed into my face minutes earlier,” he wrote.

“It only gets better from there. As expected, there are plenty of stories about drinking beer, off-field antics and Morley getting into trouble. But there are plenty of surprises too, including a chapter about his faith.

“I’ve had some testing times in my life. I’ve been in situations when I’ve worried for my career, and speaking to God has helped me cope with it,” Morley reveals.

Morley’s My Story also includes tributes from fellow league stars, his wife and Manchester United legend Ryan Giggs.

They help to give even more insight into the most capped English and Great Britain player of all time.

“As a prop, he is aggressive and nasty and doesn’t give an inch. As a bloke, he couldn’t be more different,” Matt King reveals.

“As good as he is on the field, the qualities of his character are far more enduring and far more sought after than his qualities as a player,” Jamie Peacock said.

Morley writes simply, but he writes from the heart and the result is brilliant. Not bad at all for a Pom.