**KOKEDAMA**

The art of **Kokedama** is said to have evolved from “Nearai,” a popular bonsai style during the early 17th century. It is the practice of removing a plant’s root system from its container, surrounding it in wet soil and wrapping the clump in moss. The moss ball is held together by winding it with string.

Today it offers an alternate way, indoors or out, to display a plant suspended from a hook or placed on a saucer without the cumbersome pot or container. The moss covering also relates better to the plant in color and texture as well as being a living or dried plant material. A plant can survive in a kokedama for a year or two before transplanting into a larger kokedama or a conventional container.

**TECHNIQUE**: This is a bit messy. Begin with a plant, soil, moss and twine.

**PLANTS**: Select a plant or combination of plants. It should be adaptable in size for living in a small, confined space, and able to tolerate periods of drought.

hare’s foot fern, stag horn fern, blue fern, button fern, saxifrage, ivy, pepperomia, spider plant

**SOIL**: Depends on the type of plant. Combination of potting soil, bark chips, peat moss, sand, or akadama (a surface-minded mineral that clumps but also drains well.

**MOSS**: Live sheet moss from outdoors or dried moss purchased at a garden center.

Fresh moss gathered from rocks, bricks, soil, trees can harbor weeds and living creatures that you may not want indoors. However being fresh it is malleable, easily absorbs water and is a naturally complimentary color. Purchased moss is usually dry and stiff. (Spagnum will hold water) (Spanish moss won’t hold water) It is treated to kill foreign matter. Avoid vibrant colored moss that has been dyed. Dried moss is a dull olive green or brown color.

**TWINE**: Binding the ball can be accomplished using thread, cotton string, jute, twine, nylon fishing line, wire or any other means that is visible or invisible. The color can blend or contrast according to taste. Addition cord or wire can be added to hang.

**STEP 1** - Soak moss in water, clean out any foreign matter or insects.

**STEP 2** - Select a bowl that is about the size you want for the ball. Line the bowl with moss, placing the good side of the moss facing the bowl. Better to have too much than too little.

**STEP 3** - Line the moss with fine mesh (like from onions or oranges) and trim excess.

**STEP 4** - Place a small amount of soil on the bottom.

**STEP 5** - Knock off half of the soil from the plant’s roots. Place plant in the bowl and tamp down to remove air. Add more soil if needed.

**STEP 6** - Cut about 5 to 6 feet of twine or wire.

“Tease” the moss ball out of the bowl, gathering the moss up to the neck of the plant. Squeeze into a ball shape. (greening pins may help secure moss in place)

**STEP 7** - Leave a tail on the twine or wire and begin to wrap the ball. Increase tension while wrapping. Continue to shape as you wrap. Tie off twine tightly and securely knot. Additional twine can be wrapped around. Make a loop for hanging, if desired, or bend a coat hanger to make a metal hanger.

**STEP 8** - Fill a deep bowl with water and soak the kokedama for 24 hours. Add fertilizer to the water for subsequent watering. Learn to determine by weight if the plant needs watering. 10 minutes of soaking will saturate the moss ball, and allowing the ball to drain in a drip tray or on top of a wide mouth vase will protect surfaces. Keeping the plant sufficiently moist is the main challenge.

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