

Kokedama

moss ball garden



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Free your houseplants' roots from their pots by creating organic art for your home through kokedama, a form of Japanese bonsai, where plants are grown in a special soil mix and wrapped in moss. Kokedama is a uniquely beautiful way to grow houseplants in a non-traditional way.

WHAT PLANTS CAN BE GROWN IN MOSS BALLS?

Many different kinds of plants can successfully be grown as a kokedama. An established houseplant that needs to be repotted, cuttings of houseplants with newly developed roots, or seasonal plants to decorate your space can all be planted in the moss balls.

Ideal plants are ones that can grow in drier conditions, such as ferns, philodendron, dracaena, spider plants, and even small orchids. Succulents can also be planted in moss balls and will require less water. A kokedama can be created with any size of plants the size of the ball will just vary to accommodate the root mass of the plant.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Lightweight potting mix or peat moss
- Akadama, a coarse clay-like mineral used as bonsai soil
- Plant
- Moss, sheet or Spanish
- String or jute
- Scissors
- Water

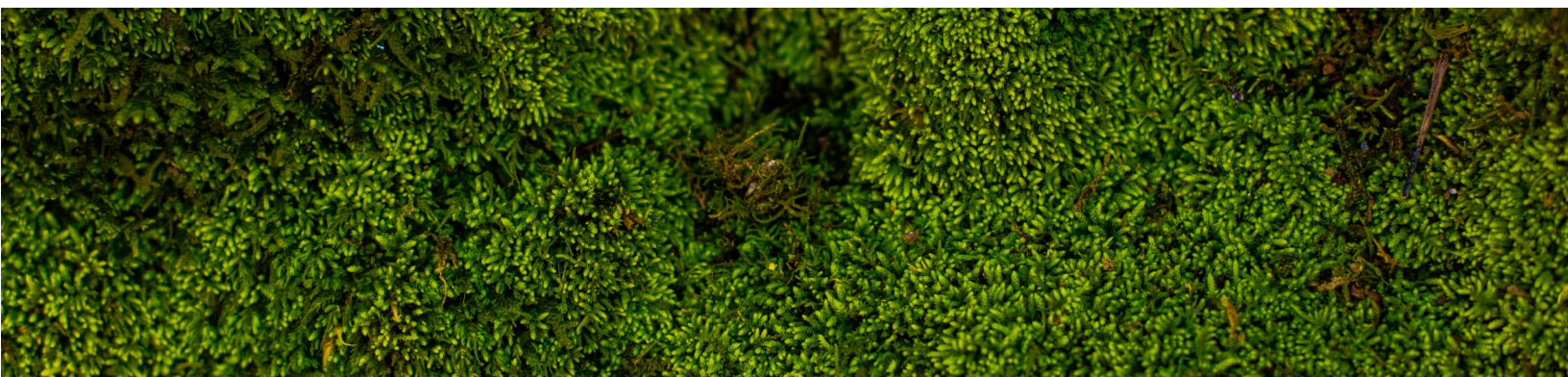
DIRECTIONS

1. Soak the moss in a bucket of water for one hour to rehydrate the organic material. Squeeze out the excess liquid and set it aside until it is time to wrap the ball.



KOKEDAMA (PHOTO: CANDICE HART)

2. Combine the soil mixture of 70% potting mix or peat moss and 30% bonsai soil to create a ball. Slowly add water to the mixture until it can be pressed firmly into a ball without falling apart. The amount of soil mixture used will depend on the root mass of the plant.
3. Remove the plant from its container and gently break apart the root ball. Remove any existing soil and expose most of the roots.
4. Create a hole in the soil ball large enough for the roots of the plant. Another option is to gently break the soil ball into two pieces, lay the roots on one side, and push the soil back together around the roots into a ball.
5. Press the moss around the soil ball until it is fully covered. Or create a thin layer of moss on a flat surface, set the ball in the middle, and wrap the moss around the ball.
6. Use the string to attach the moss to the ball. Secure the string to the ball and wrap it randomly around the ball in every direction to keep the moss in place. Tie it off tightly to create a firm, sturdy ball.





HOW TO CARE FOR A KOKEDAMA

Watering

Proper watering will be key to keeping your kokedama alive. Stick your finger in the top of the ball near the base of the plant to feel if the soil is dry. The weight of the ball will also tell you if it needs to be watered- if it is light, it is time to water.

To water the kokedama, fill a bucket or sink with lukewarm water. Gently push the moss ball into the water so it starts to absorb the water. Soak the completely submerged ball in the water for 15 to 20 minutes. Drain the water, and squeeze the moss ball to remove excess water, and let it drip dry before returning it to its decorative space.

Mist the moss ball between watering to keep it from completely drying out.

Sunlight

The amount of light your kokedama will need depends on the plant used. Avoid full-sun locations though as it may dry out the moss ball too quickly. Keep the plant away from any hot or cold drafts.

Fertilizer

Fertilize your kokedama monthly by mixing the fertilizer into the water when soaking. Use an indoor plant fertilizer at half the recommended concentration. A time-released fertilizer can also be incorporated into the soil mixture when planting.

Repotting

Plants can successfully be grown as a kokedama for several years. Once you start seeing roots emerge from the moss ball, it is time to repot the plant into a larger kokedama or container. String may need to be replaced occasionally on older kokedama.

DISPLAYING KOKEDAMAS

A kokedama can be displayed on decorative trays or dishes, antique bowls or saucers, or attached to a piece of driftwood. They can also be hung with decorative string or wire from a window or ceiling, creating a string garden with more than more kokedama. These beautiful, natural planters make a great gift or can add a little green to your space.



KOKEDAMA (IMAGE BY PABLO IBAÑEZ FROM PIXABAY)

SOURCES

Brittnay Haag, Horticulture Educator; [Use DIY kokedama moss balls to grow houseplants.](#)
Gardener's Corner, November 2021



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