

## MAKE YOUR OWN KOKEDAMA

*Sandy Welches, MGV 2005*



[www.succulentgardens.com](http://www.succulentgardens.com)

Simple yet elegant, it's made by wrapping a plant's roots with bonsai soil, sphagnum sheet moss and string, rather than planting in the ground or a container. This creates a striking focal point, drawing attention to the shape of flowers and foliage, especially in contrast to the smooth, round moss-covered ball.

Select your plant-ivy, ferns, sedum and other and houseplants work very well. In the summer, you can do this with bright, sunny annuals. And if you start with a plant that is from a 2- to 4 inch pot, it won't outgrow the ball for some time. Below is a summary of the instructions. To see more, go to [www.gardengate.com](http://www.gardengate.com), December 2016 issue.

[www.thesill.com](http://www.thesill.com)



You've seen these in gift shops in nurseries or in your favorite floral shop. I've seen them in high-end catalogues like Calyx. Well, why not make your own? I found this article in Garden Gate Magazine this month. What great fun to do with a child or grandchild! You can wait until a rainy spring day or use cuttings from your sedums, ferns, or other houseplants this winter. I found some nice, small sedums in Home Depot.

Perfect as a gift, arranged on a tabletop inside or hung from tree branches outdoors, kokedama, translated as "moss ball," is a Japanese form of garden art.

*Kokedama are easy and fun to make.*

*You'll need the following materials:*

- \* Peat Moss
- \* Akadama soil (bonsai soil)
- \* Sphagnum sheet moss
- \* Waxed string or floral wire
- \* Plants proportionate to the size of the finished ball
- \* Scissors, bowl, gloves for mixing soil, and measuring cup

### Prepare the Ball

Combine the akadama soil (granular volcanic clay soil from Japan) with peat moss in a 1:1 ratio. This mix helps keep the ball moist so you won't have to water it as often. For an average-sized ball 4 inches in diameter, add one cup of each potting medium to a mixing bowl. Combine them, crushing some of the akadama pellets as you go. To moisten, pour in water little by little. If the soil gets too wet, it will be hard to handle. (approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup to get the right consistency). Once you've molded a ball, hold it in both hands and press one thumb into the top to make a hole for your plant's roots.

**Plant, Wrap and Wind**

Set ball aside. Gently remove potting mix from your plant and slip the bare roots into the hole. Gently pack the ball around the roots. Lay out the sphagnum moss and place the ball in the center of it; then wrap the moss around the ball. To secure the moss in place hold the ball in one hand and wind the waxed string or floral wire around it in all directions. Start at the bottom of the ball and remember to leave a long piece of exposed string as you begin the wrapping. You will use it when you finish wrapping to tie it off. Your ball is ready to be PLACED on a shelf or counter.

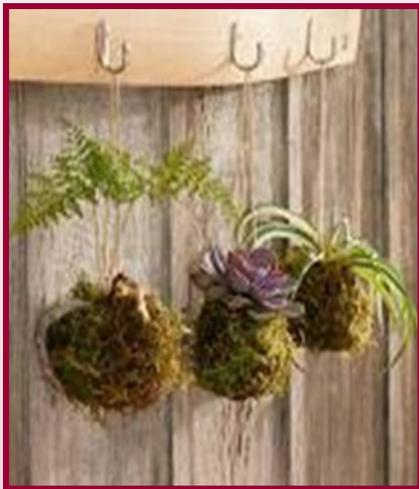
If you want to HANG your kokedama, begin wrapping the string or wire at the TOP of the ball (leaving a long, exposed piece to hang it when you finish wrapping).

**Caring For Kokedama**

Fill a small bowl halfway with water and set your kokedama in for 5-10 minutes or until it is heavy. Every few days, feel the ball's weight to determine if it needs soaking again. The humidity and temperature inside your home or out in the garden will affect how often you need to water.

Wait a few days before exposing plants that like full sun to those conditions. Hardening them off will ensure they don't burn. During the growing season, feed the kokedama once every few weeks by mixing water-soluble fertilizer in the water bowl. Place your ball in a shallow, decorative dish and surround with small pebbles for a lovely presentation. If your plant starts to look stressed, it may be time to move it to a larger bowl or just start over. Enjoy!

*Courtney, S. (2016, December). Making Your Own Kokedama. Garden Gate Magazine, Issue 132, pp.*



[www.vivaterra.com](http://www.vivaterra.com)



[www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com)