



*Forest Floor Terrarium
Background Information*



The Water Cycle

What is it?

Water cycle is a phrase that describes the flow of water on the Earth, which is driven by heat energy.

Usually we think of this as water *evaporating* into the air via the energy of the sun, *condensing* into clouds, *precipitating* downward, and *collecting* on the Earth--and then the process starts all over again. While this is true, there are many more aspects of the water cycle to consider. The human role in the water cycle, *percolation* of water in the soil, and *transpiration* of water through plants are some of the other ways water cycles on the Earth.

How does it relate to this activity?

The forest floor *collects* moisture beneath the leaf litter and in rotting logs. Heat, generated during decomposition, causes moisture to *evaporate* into the air and *condense* onto the sides and top of the terrarium. In addition, plants also *transpire* moisture into the air through their leaves. Over time, more moisture *condenses* and moisture on the top and sides begins to *precipitate* back to the soil where it *collects*, *percolates*, and begins the cycle again.