

### TECHNIQUES

#### **To Plant from Outside the Form**

1. Soak the moss filled form in water and let drain
2. Using “cell pack” sized plants (3/4” to 1-1/2”) you can poke a hole into the damp moss from the outside of the form and insert the plant plug. Ensure that you have removed any excess soil from the plug while not disturbing the root.

#### **To Plant from Inside the Form**

1. Soak the moss filled form in water and let drain
2. Snip the plastic connecting ties and open the form into its parts and pull out some of the moss
3. Remove a little of the soil from around the root ball and insert your plant into the form. Wiggle the leaves up through the wires. Repack the moss around the roots. When planted, reattach the form with plastic cable connectors.

#### **In Ground Planting:**

You may use these topiary frames in the traditional sense by simply placing your item over a shrub (such as boxwood) that is rooted in the ground and allow it to grow up into the form. Trim to the shape of the form and you can be the next Edward Scissor Hands.

#### **In Moss Planting:**

Fill bottom portion of the topiary frame with sphagnum moss (i.e. 10” of moss into bottom of swan). Plant a climbing vine, such as Creeping Fig, into the moss and train the fig to develop into the upper portion of the frame. The result – a simple, inexpensive, low maintenance, portable planted topiary form.

### TIPS

#### **Watering:**

1. Once you have your topiary planted, water with a good starter fertilizer (10-52-10) and keep in a shaded area out of the wind for several days before moving to a selected area of your garden.
2. Check for water daily, as you would a hanging basket or deck planter. Fertilize every other week with a balanced 20-20-20 fertilizer.
3. Remember each plant has its own unique water requirement, so keep in mind when choosing your plants.

### **Plant Texture**

Take a few moments to look at your animal. Then look for plants which best represent it: fur, feathers, mane, smooth, fluffy, scaly. Picture your animal dressed in plants. Don't forget the details: whiskers in kittens, stripes for bees, eye lashes on your giraffe. Plant color can create a pattern in your animal as well.

### **Scale:**

Smaller leaved plants work best on smaller animals. The idea is to complement, not overwhelm the form.

### **Culture:**

It is best to use plants that like the same conditions. Succulents, which are drought tolerant, are a great choice. Rockery type plants, which are invasive and low growing also make great topiary plants.

### **What do I do with my topiary over the winter months?**

You have a couple of options. If your topiary is small to medium in size, one option is to mulch in your item using leaves/grass clippings or wrap it in burlap. Or you can move it indoors to an unheated garage near a window. The key here is to protect the plants from the wind.

If your topiary is too large to mulch in or move indoors, you can drive stakes into the ground and wrap it in burlap. Again, this is to prevent the wind from getting at the roots. Alternatively, you can simply let your topiary stay as it is and replant in the spring, giving your topiaries a fresh new batch of color and texture!

