

TERRARIUM BUILDING, PART III: SOME OTHER IDEAS.

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INTRODUCTION

In this third and last article of this series I want to describe some ideas for terraria which have been designed by other snake keepers. Again these terraria are most suitable for snakes living at ground level. Because the access to these terraria is from the top, it is not possible to stack them, and they therefore have to be placed on a table along a wall for example.

AN ALL-GLASS TERRARIUM

This terrarium (figure 1, photo 1) has a glass cover that closes the terrarium completely. If you want to work inside of the terrarium the glass

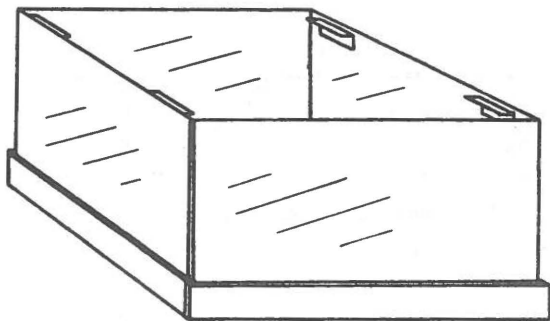


Fig. 1.

cover has to be lifted with a sucker disc and put somewhere in a safe spot. At first sight this system may look impractical, but it has great advantages:

1. When the terrarium is furnished nicely it has a very decorative appearance;
2. It is impossible to lift the glass cover without a sucker pad, so the terrarium is in-

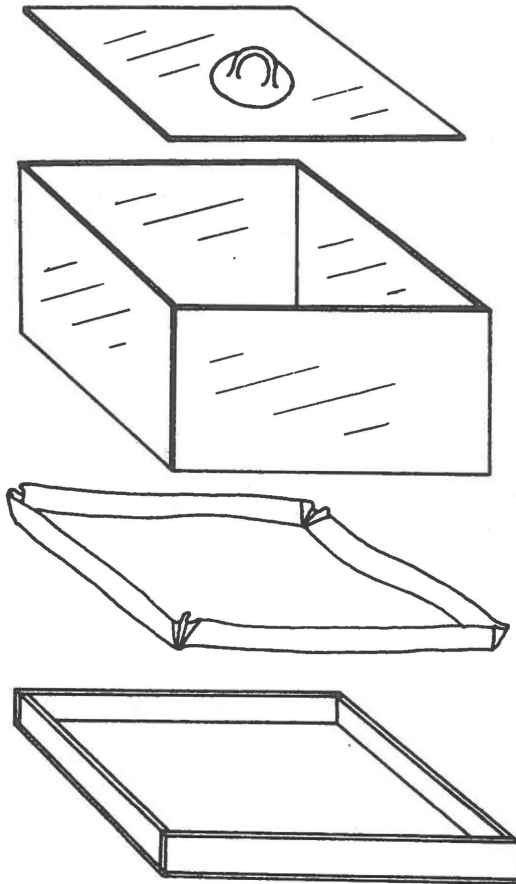


Fig. 2.

- accessible to unauthorized persons (providing you keep the sucker disc in a safe place);
3. The sides need not be very high because the terrarium is designed to house snakes that live on the ground. Therefore the interior of the terrarium is clearly visible whilst you are working in it;
 4. It is very simple to make.

We use about 12 mm thick multi-ply wood for the base and for the raised borders. After fixing it, one can varnish or stain the tray. In this tray we put a piece of thick plastic (figure 2). For the four sides and the cover we use glass of at least 5 mm thickness (the sharp edges are sandpapered carefully to smooth them off). The four sides are mounted together with silicon-sealer. In the corners now mount four pieces of angled aluminium (for example Dexion) on which the glass cover will rest (figure 3). Bear in mind that the pieces of angle-aluminium should be mounted exactly so that the glass cover is flush with the top edge of the sides.

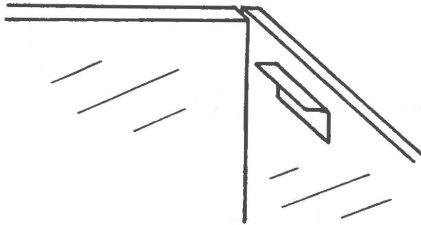


Fig. 3.

The plastic that lies in the wooden tray, can be cut off at the same height as the raised border. Instead of using plastic, the base can alternatively be mounted with formica or made water resistant in another way.

Lighting and heating must be external: the terrarium has to be placed in a heated room and for

lighting you can hang (for example) a fluorescent lamp over the terrarium. However, it is possible to heat the terrarium internally by means of a heating cable. This can be done in one of the following ways:

1. By making little legs under the wooden tray, there is then some space where a heating cable can be mounted against the underside of the wooden tray;
2. By making a little excavation in the wood at one point under the glass back, it becomes possible to lead the wire of the heating cable directly under through the glass back side (figure 4).

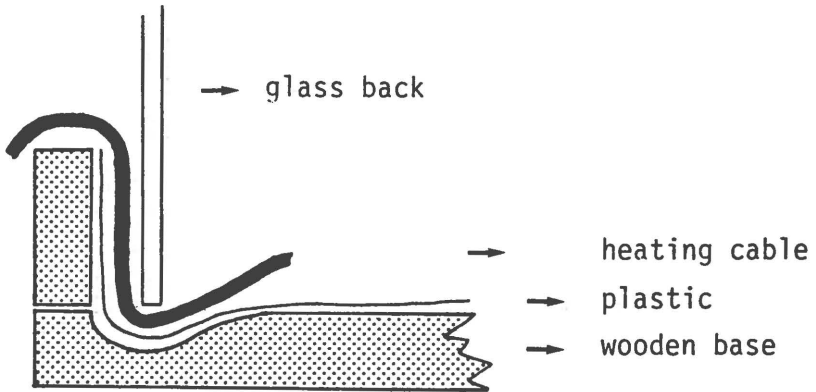


Fig. 4-a. Side view.

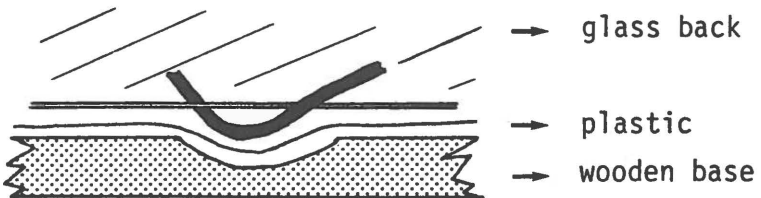


Fig. 4-b. Back view.

A final word about the sucker disc. A good, large sucker disc (diameter about 10 cm), with which the glass cover can be lifted safely, is difficult to obtain. You will probably have to visit several glass dealers before you are lucky enough to obtain one. Catch the glass cover with your free hand immediately after having lifted it a little with the sucker pad. This prevents damage to the glass cover when it loosens from the sucker prematurely by accident and drops down again.

TERRARIA WITH A GLASS COVER AND FRONT

Embroidering on the concept of the glass cover for the above mentioned terrarium, we can design a series of terraria attached to each other, with

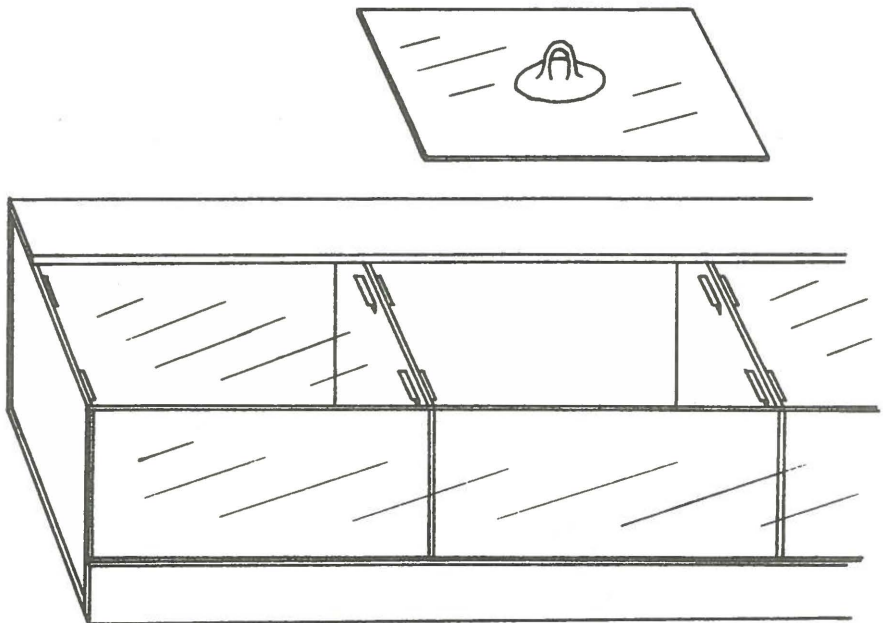


Fig. 5.

wooden backs and sides and glass covers and fronts (figure 5, photo 2). By allowing the glass front to rest on a raised border one does not have to directly view the layer of substrate.

The back part of the top can now be made out of wood too, against which a lamp can be fixed. Because the back is made out of wood, one can fix ventilation gratings (see Part I in Vol. 6, No. 5) in it. To advance the stoutness of the whole terrarium the base can be best made out of 18 mm thick plastic-coated chipboard. The sides can be made out of the same material, but need only be 12 mm thick. The glass used has again to be at least 5 mm thick.

AN OUTDOOR TERRARIUM

At many market-gardens one can buy square eternite plant-boxes. By fixing four little wheels under the box and making a wire gauze cover, one has a nice outdoor terrarium (figure 6, photo 3).

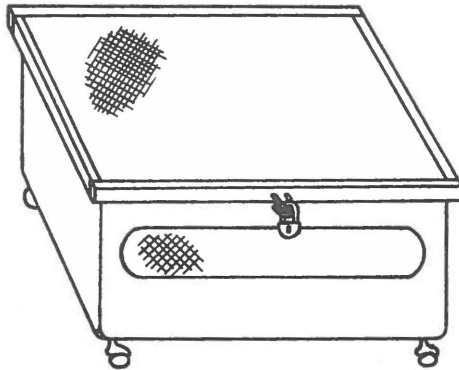


Fig. 6.

When the weather is good you push the terrarium into the garden or on the balcony or roof-terrace; when the weather worsens you simply wheel the



Foto 1. Terrarium Cees van Riel. Foto: Anton van Woerkom.



Foto 2. Terrarium Hans Triet. Foto: Anton van Woerkom.

terrarium to a shelter or inside the house!
To be on the safe side, do not forget to drill
some drainage holes in the base and make sure that
the cover can not be lifted by the snakes.

A DECORATIVE TERRARIUM

At the house of an acquaintance in Switzerland I
saw the terrarium that is depicted in figure 7 and
on photo 4. This terrarium, inhabited by some *Vi-
pera kaznakovi*, demonstrates how a decorative
terrarium can be built with some creativity of
your own.

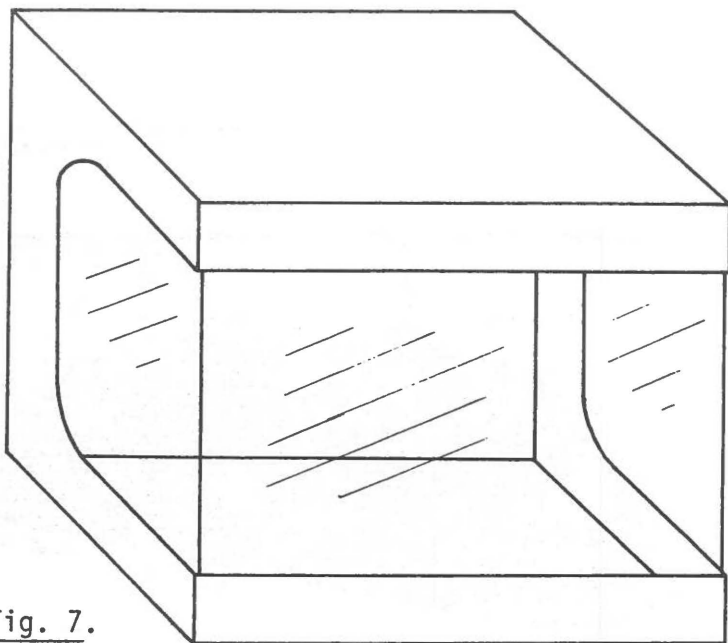


Fig. 7.



Foto 3. Terrarium Hans Triet. Foto: Anton van Woerkom.



Foto 4. Terrarium Hans Triet. Foto: Anton van Woerkom.

CONCLUSION

This is the last part of this series of articles on terraria for snakes which live on the ground or in low bushes. I hope that I have put some useful ideas to you, which will enable you to produce some practical and attractive vivaria for yourself.