



Division Of Geological Survey

HANDS ON

EARTH SCIENCE

No. 1

CRYSTAL GARDEN

by Sherry L. Weisgarber

This often used project provides wonder and excitement as the crystals grow.

Materials:

- 6-7 barbecue charcoals or stones (1 to 2 inches across)
- shallow bowl (aluminum pie pan works fine)
- 4-6 tablespoons table salt
- 4-6 tablespoons liquid laundry bluing (see NOTE below)
- 4-6 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon ammonia (be careful using ammonia around children)
- food coloring

Collect several small pieces of limestone, brick, coal, or barbecue charcoal. You may want to try a bowl of each to determine which material grows the best crystals. Place the charcoal or stones clustered together in the bowl. Mix all of the ingredients together, except the food coloring, in the order listed using the same amount of salt, bluing, and water for each batch made. Pour the mixture very slowly over the stones with a spoon. The mixture may not be dissolved depending on the number of tablespoons of ingredients used. You may want to make different batches using different amounts of ingredients to see which works best. Drop food coloring over the coated stones. Using different colors produces a variegated crystal garden. Crystals should begin to form in about 20 minutes and continue growing for a day or two. Adding any excess mixture to the bottom of the bowl over the next few days may keep the garden growing longer. This creation will crumble very easily, so don't move it around too much.

NOTE: Laundry bluing comes in a small blue bottle and generally can be found in the laundry section of a grocery store next to the starch and bleach products.

SOURCE: *Kids create!*, Laurie Carlson; and Nevada Mining Association, Lois K. Ports.