

Deserts

Running Time: 26 Minutes

Nifty questions in this episode:

- How much of the land in the world is desert?
- How do animals survive in the desert?
- When would we call a body of land a desert?

Awesome answers:

- One fifth of all land on Earth is always dry—desert!
- Species develop ways to manage water.
- When the annual rainfall is 10 inches or less.

Experiments shown on the video:

H₂O...IT'S IN THE BAG!

Objective: To demonstrate water evaporation from living vegetation.

- Cover a potted leafy plant and a potted cactus plant with plastic bags.
- Use tape to seal them closed.
- Place both in a warm place or in the sun.
- Observe the water that accumulates inside the plastic bags and record your observations. How do your results support the desert/non-desert theory?

More interesting stuff to do:

DRY WATER!

Objective: To demonstrate water evaporation from dry vegetation.


- Fill a large cool bowl with vegetation (grass, plants, flowers, succulents, etc.) and place it in a wider bowl.
- Drape a piece of plastic wrap over a stick or ruler standing up in the middle of the vegetation, making sure the inside edges of the wrap don't touch the edges of the bowl and will allow the fresh water to empty into the bottom bowl.
- Place bowls in the sun and collect fresh water.

BAKED DESERT

Objective: To determine which type of soil absorbs and retains the most heat.

- Obtain two small boxes (about 9" x 14"); fill one box with damp soil and the other box with sand and some gravel.
- Place both boxes in direct sunlight or place two floodlights directly over and very close to the surface of the boxes for about 30 minutes. This will cause the surface of each box to become very hot.
- Gently push two baking thermometers or household thermometers 1/4" into the topsoil surface of each box (one thermometer in each box). Record the surface temperature of each box.
- Continue pushing the thermometers 1/4" into the soil, one test at a time, and record the temperature until you have reached the depth of 1". Compare the data that you have collected. Which soil retains and reflects more heat?

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 closed-captioned



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