

Reptiles Rock --- and so do minerals!

Learn why they are the BEEZ NEEZ for your bioactive terrarium

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The Bio Dude

Minerals play an extremely important role with many reptiles and amphibians in the wild. With reptiles and amphibians being [cold blooded](#), they need the ambient temperature of their environment to regulate their internal body temperature. In the wild, many reptiles will use rocks to bask, blend in for ambush predator purposes or to create microclimates within their ecosystem. Rocks also play a very large role with putting lost elements back into your bioactive

substrate when enclosed in a terrarium. Rocks not only can create great basking spots, they also have many other beneficial roles with your pets well-being in a captive environment. This article will cover how rocks are helpful and how your pets will love having them in their enclosures.

In a captive setting, it is very important for us as keepers to closely replicate your reptiles natural environment as accurately as possible. Many terrestrial reptiles such as Bearded Dragons will quickly relish a rock hotspot. Rocks do many things with heat. They not only absorb heat and retain it inside the overall structure (some rocks retain heat much better than others) but can also be stacked, buried or placed strategically in the terrarium for advanced microclimates within the tank itself. With your cryptic colored reptiles many of them will use their unique color adaption to blend perfectly into the rocks, attempting to remain unseen. A great example of this in the wild is a Chuckwalla or Desert Iguana. Their cryptic coloration(Browns, Grays, Blacks etc) are used to blend their bodies into their surrounding biome (rocks, sand, smaller biomass items) to prevent predation and for hunting and and basking purposes.

When using rocks as a basking spot it is important to ensure the surface area does not get too hot for the reptile. Placing a rock at least 6-8" under any basking spot should create the surface heat you require + whatever hotspot you require. When testing your temperatures, a tempgun or the [Dude's thermometer/hygrometer](#) can be used. As your rock absorbs the heat, it will not only dissipate the heat into any surrounding open air spaces, but will also leech heat into your bioactive substrate. This not only can help with creating microclimates under the sections of rock, it will give your herps some options for when it comes to thermoregulating zones. Blue Tongue Skinks, Leopard Geckos and Bearded Dragons absolutely love using [flat rocks as their basking area](#), which is easily achieved in your terrarium.

Rocks also can play a major role with providing different levels of enrichment. Providing tight spaces that allow them to feel secure is easily achieved. For example, the Dude's Ocellated Skinks have different types of rocks in their terrarium. One of those rocks, [Texas Flagstone](#) is stacked appropriately to create many micro-spaces that these lizards love to squeeze their bodies into (as this is what they would do in the wild) while providing a necessary surface area for thermoregulation. For other more intelligent lizards, such as Bearded Dragons or monitors, hiding different food items within rocks can also be a good tool to enrich them in a captive environment. Minerals can also be used to create water features, breeding pools and water edge features for any paludarium or aquarium. [Check out the Dude's Borneo Eared Frog Vivarium video to see rocks in action.](#)

Over time, as your terrarium and soil progresses your essential [clean up crews \(Isopods and Springtails etc\)](#) will eventually deplete essential elements out of your soil, leaving a void that can sometimes cause issues with the longevity of your soil. Many rocks when placed on top of your soil directly and hand misted will leech essential minerals such as Calcium, Lime and trace elements back into the soil. This is very important because this can help reinforce your bacterial and fungal process', enrich the longevity of the soil and help strengthen the symbiotic relationships that occur within your bioactive substrate. Isopods and springtails will also greatly

appreciate the calcium content gradually released into your soil from the minerals, which will also strengthen your populations and cultivation success.

Rocks in your terrariums also provide a great resource for naturally filing your pets nails down so they are not as sharp. All of us know that over time your pet Bearded Dragon, Blue Tongue Skink or Leopard Gecko can sometimes get sharp nails. Nails that can sometimes scratch or puncture softer hands if the user does not wear protection. With young keepers (children) this is a great opportunity for parents to keep the critters nails filed down short without actually having to trim them outside the enclosure.

There are many great options out there, but to name a few here are some great options currently available in the pet trade.

1. [Pumice Rock \(Lava Rock\)](#) - Absorbs and retains heat extremely well due to it's porous nature. Can also be hand carved to create beautiful natural waterfalls or streams.
2. [Oklahoma Creek Rock](#) – Great for creating larger basking zones or larger water features.
3. [Flagstone Rocks](#) – The best there is for creating basking spots. Usually flat, breakable and retains heat extremely well.
4. Dragon stone rock
5. 1000 layer rock
6. Snowflake rock
7. Limestone rock
8. Bone Rock

Overall, using rocks in your bioactive terrariums brings enormous benefits. It is very important that when using rocks in the enclosure that they are all secure, unable to be moved. If they are larger and if you have a burrowing species (such as a Blue Tongue Skink) be sure that the rock is buried in the substrate so if your animal burrows underneath the rock does not collapse and hurt your inhabitant. Rocks can be used to create beautiful streams or waterfalls within your enclosed ecosystem to give an even more natural feel and look for not only you but your inhabitant.

The Dude Abides