

Terrestrial Isopods

A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

Immediate Care and Handling

As soon as your isopods (pill bugs or sow bugs) arrive, open the shipping container and check their condition. The isopods come in a damp paper towel to provide the humidity they require. After examining, close the container and prepare a habitat using any available plastic container with a lid. Punch air holes in the lid, mist inside the container with room-temperature water, and place a cup of moist potting soil in the bottom. Put a slice of raw potato or apple on the soil.

Empty the contents of the shipping container (including the paper towel) into the habitat. Gently unfold the paper towel and shake off as many of the isopods as possible. If you are unable to dislodge all of them, leave the paper towel in a loose tangle and replace the lid. Leave in a darkened area for at least an hour. Most of the isopods should move down to the damp soil. Use a camel-hair brush to remove any that remain on the paper towel. Mist the inside of the container again and replace the lid. You can keep the isopods like this over a weekend.

Habitat Setup and Maintenance

Put 4 to 5 cm of moist potting soil in a terrarium. Cover the surface, preferably with leaf litter or hardwood mulch. Do not use pine bark or mulch treated with chemicals. Cover to maintain humidity.

Direct sunlight may kill the isopods, so place the terrarium in indirect light. Maintain at 20 to 22° C (68 to 72° F). Soil should be damp, with decaying wood, leaves, or compost in the terrarium. Mist the habitat to keep it humid; if it gets moldy, increase ventilation or reduce misting. Other than humidity, isopods need little care. Feed fish food flakes, leaf litter, and pieces of raw potatoes, apples, or carrots. Immediately remove moldy food.

FAQ's

Our pill bugs disappeared. Where are they?

Isopods avoid light. They are probably under some leaf litter, or they have burrowed into the soil. Leave raw potato or apple on the soil overnight. Gently lift it and you will probably find the isopods underneath. You are more likely to observe the isopods if you keep the terrarium in a dimly lit area.

Our pill bugs died while we were observing them with magnifiers. What happened?

Isopods' gills dry quickly, which can kill them. To observe isopods with a hand lens, place in a shallow cup with damp soil or paper towel. When done, return the isopods to the terrarium quickly.

Can other animals be kept in the terrarium?

Yes, animals such as millipedes, bessbugs, and other organisms with similar habitat requirements. Spiders and lizards may eat isopods.

In our terrarium, we are seeing lots of tiny bugs that look a bit like small pill bugs. What are they?

You have provided a good habitat for the isopods and they are reproducing. The young resemble the adults, except for their smaller size and paler color, and will molt 4 to 5 times as they grow.

Problems? We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

Orders and replacements: 1-800-334-5551 then select Customer Service

Technical Support and Questions: caresheets@carolina.com



© 2008 Carolina Biological Supply Company