

Grow your own crystals at home!

What's that Sparkle?

You may have noticed that some petrified wood is very sparkly and there is a good reason for this. Petrified wood consists of crystals of silicon dioxide (SiO_2) also known as quartz. The crystals in petrified wood are usually microscopic and create a look similar to opaque jasper.

Sometimes, a hole existed in the wood before it was buried and inside these holes larger quartz crystals formed creating a dazzling array of sparkling jewels.

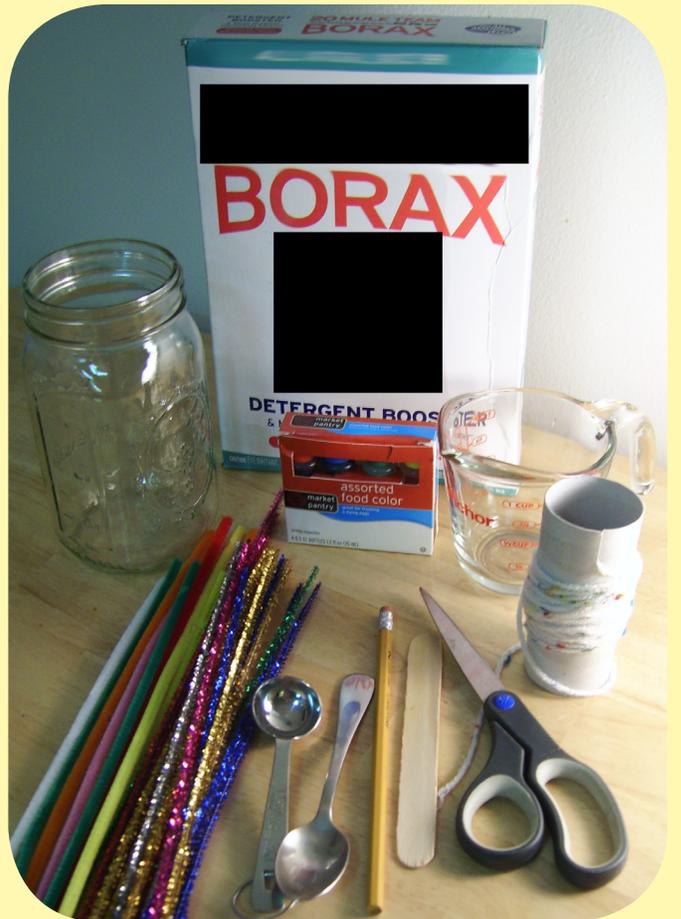
You can make your own crystals inside of pipe cleaner 'logs' using borax soap with the following fun and easy activity (adult supervision/assistance is recommended).

Safety Cautions: Adult assistance is highly recommended for this activity. Follow all safety and hazard information on the packaging of the borax. Breathing in borax dust may also be harmful.



What you Need

- Borax (usually found in the laundry aisle)
- wide-mouth glass container (mason jars or clean spaghetti sauce jars work really well)
- string or yarn
- scissors
- a spoon for stirring
- a tablespoon for measuring
- a large popsicle stick or a pencil
- food coloring (optional)
- pipe cleaners (your choice in colors)
- glass measuring cup
- boiling water



Step 1:

Choose one or more pipe cleaners in the colors you want and wrap them around a small cylindrical object to create the shape of a log (your thumb works too). Your pipe cleaner log will have a hole in the center. Make sure your log is not too big! Your crystals need room to grow in your jar.



Step 2:

Tie one end of your string or yarn to the top of your pipe cleaner log and dangle it into your jar until your log is about one inch above the bottom of the jar. Tie the other end of the string to your popsicle stick or pencil. The popsicle stick or pencil will sit across the mouth of the jar and hold your log in place to prevent it from falling to the bottom.

Step 3:

Pour boiling water into the jar while your pipe cleaner log is still inside. Getting the log wet will help you sink it into the water again after adding the borax. Remove your log, add borax to the water in your jar, and stir until all the borax is dissolved. About 3 tablespoons of borax for every one cup of water is recommended. At this time you can add food coloring to your water if you want colored crystals. (Safety tip: the glass jar will be very hot, using a towel or oven mitts to handle the jar is encouraged.)



Step 4:

Place your pipe cleaner log back into the water with the popsicle stick or pencil sitting on the mouth of the jar. Your log should be hanging free in the water and not touching the bottom or sides of the jar. Place your jar in a spot where it won't be bumped or knocked over. You will start to see small crystals forming in just a few hours and after 24 hours your crystal log will be complete!