Moss Safari

Saturday 11th June 2022

Inspiration for this experiment came from one of the Quekett's followers on Twitter, Andy Chandler-Grevatt, and his website Moss Safari: https://mosssafari.wordpress.com/.

These are his instructions:

Find a sample of moss
Collect moss that has fallen from a roof, that is on low walls or between paving slabs.
SAFETY: Do not take risks to collect moss from high or difficult to access places.

Soak the moss sample
Place the moss in a shallow dish and cover it with mineral water.
NOTE: Very wet moss can be squeezed straight away. Very dry moss samples will need soaking for at least 48 hours in mineral water (not tap water, the chlorine can harm the sample).

Prepare a filter paper in a funnel
Place a folded filter paper in a funnel stood in a beaker.
You can use thick kitchen tissue instead of filter paper.

Squeeze the soaked moss
Agitate the moss with some tweezers, then pick up the moss and squeeze it into the shallow dish to remove the water (and organisms within it).
SAFETY: Consider wearing plastic gloves, especially if you have cuts on your hand. Do not eat or drink while doing a moss squeeze or Moss Safari.

Filter the moss squeeze water
This step concentrates the organisms in the sample.
Empty the moss squeeze water from the dish into the filter paper.
Before all the water is gone, use a pipette to suck up the last millilitre of moss water and any 'bits'.

Prepare the slide for observation
Place one drop of moss water into the well of a concave glass microscope slide.
Place a glass cover slip over the droplet and observe at the lowest magnification.

I collected moss from the roof of our bungalow on Thursday and soaked it in rain water.

In addition to my Olympus CHS microscope, I have brought the soaked moss, and some tweezers, small Petri dishes, pipettes, filter paper, plain slides, cavity slides and coverslips. I cannot find my funnel, so I will try to manage without it.

I have never done this before, so I do not know what we will see.

Alan Wood