South Mountain Conservancy

South Mountain Reservation Stewardship, Advocacy & Public Engagement

FAIRY HOUSE BUILDING GUIDELINES

Get ready! Building for the Fairy Trail is both an artistic and architectural adventure.

The Fairy Trail is a beloved community project of the **South Mountain Conservancy (SMC)**, steward and advocate for the South Mountain Reservation. SMC works to preserve, protect, and restore the Reservation's ecology and natural beauty through volunteer programs, sustainable practices, and community engagement.

Each year, thousands of families visit the Fairy Trail. For many children, it's their first magical introduction to the wonders of the woods, and a gentle lesson in respecting nature.

Fairies, after all, are endangered by habitat loss. That's why every fairy house must blend naturally into the landscape — no bright colors, no sparkles, no razzle-dazzle. Camouflage is part of the magic.

🌿 MAKERS: If you build it… they will come.

Imagine yourself as a tiny fairy. Would you want a cozy cottage? A woodland library? A gathering place? A playground tucked beneath ferns?

Look closely at nature's small treasures in your yard, garden, or along permitted areas outside the Reservation. Could an acorn become a cereal bowl? Maybe a seed pod transforms into a bathtub? A curled leaf into a tiny bed?

Let imagination guide you all while respecting the fairies and the forest alike!

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MATERIAL GUIDELINES

All Fairy Houses must be made of **natural materials** that will decompose over time.

Use:

- Flat wood bases, slate, or small cutting boards for stability
- Fallen branches and bark
- Acorns, pinecones, seed pods
- Dried grasses and reeds
- Small sticks and twigs
- Tiny stones or gravel for walkways
- Dried flowers or potpourri
- Store-bought moss (do not remove moss from the Reservation)
- Native vines, tree cookies, bark

Adhesives & Sealants:

- Liquid Nails
- Gorilla Wood Glue or similar exterior adhesive
- Outdoor wood glue (not hot glue)
- Light spray varnish (if needed to protect your final build)

Houses should be built on a sturdy base to withstand weather and transport.

IMPORTANT STEWARDSHIP RULES

- Do not take materials from living plants
- Do not dig moss from the Reservation
- Keep hardware (hinges, metal) to an absolute minimum
- Houses must withstand seasonal weather
- No plastic, synthetic, painted, or non-biodegradable materials
- No glitter, bright colors, or decorative sparkle
- No names or titles on houses

The goal is harmony with the forest — subtle, hidden, and respectful.

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✨ SIMPLICITY IS WELCOME✨

A fairy house does not need to resemble a traditional miniature house. It can be simple! A hollow log, a mossy nook, a twig shelter. Often, the most magical creations are the most understated.

Thank you for helping us preserve the magic of the woods while protecting the natural landscape that makes it possible. We can't wait to see what you build!

Fairy Trail Coordinator Beth Kelly and SMC Operations Director Penni Malakates can be contacted at fairytrail@somocon.org or via Instagram @southmountainfairytrail

Information on the South Mountain Conservancy and the South Mountain Reservation can be found at: https://www.somocon.org/about-us/

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