

## **Guidelines for Building Fairy Houses**

(Originally Adapted from Portsmouth, NH, Guidelines)

There is major rigid requirement for building a fairy house to be included in any Fairy Houses Tour sponsored by The Nature Museum at Grafton. **All fairy houses must appear to be made entirely of natural components and contain no invasive plants (for pictures and list, see [www.vtinvasiveplants.org/invaders.php](http://www.vtinvasiveplants.org/invaders.php)) or obvious manmade materials.** The Fairy Houses Tour was inspired by Tracy Kane's Fairy Houses series of books, written to motivate children to use their imagination and natural objects they had found to build houses that might attract fairies or other wee folk.

However, fairy houses built to be viewed by the public on the tour must be made to withstand over two days and nights of unpredictable weather and uninvited animal visitors. Therefore, houses built to be displayed on the tour may be made using hot glue, acrylic spray, natural twine, and other manmade items, but these **must be completely concealed** so that the houses appear to be entirely natural and perhaps made by the fairies themselves.

Below are questions and some answers and suggestions for prospective fairy-house builders for the tour.

**Are houses to be built in advance or built on location?** Either. They may be set up from 3-5 PM or earlier on Friday, the day before the tour starts. But please call the Museum in advance to let us know when you would like to come. Electricity and water are available only at the Museum and not on the trail. If the structures are built in advance, you may wish to build on plywood or some other manmade base (not sheetrock); however, the manmade base must be concealed with natural materials. Please remember that delicate living things should not be hurt or abused. Also, after the event, staff and volunteers must restore some areas to look just as they did before the tour.

**The basic structure** may be constructed from items such as twigs, bark, vines, or tall grasses forming a lean-to, teepee, shed, or other shelter. Or you may find an item that is already suitable as a shelter – such as a short, hollow log; small, hollow stump; gourd; or natural basket – ready to be embellished. You might want to create the “house” beside a rock, at the base of a tree, on the low branch of a bush or tree, in a tree, by a pool or stream, or anywhere else that appeals to you. Many fairy houses look so natural that they are almost hidden.

**What holds them together?** Children would use no manmade materials. But for display you may use hot wax, hot glue, glue guns, or twine. Hide the glue and choose natural twine, such as jute or sisal. Please do not use any plastic or paper products.

**What size must the house be?** Any size you wish. Most end up being about the size of a dollhouse. If you wish to use a gourd, shell, or other smaller object as a structure, your house may attract the tiniest of fairies.

**Must I provide fairies with my house?** Please do not. Houses are built to attract fairies or other wee creatures. However fairy accessories – fairy furniture, clothes, tools, etc. – enhance the appeal of fairy houses.

**Theme of fairy “house.”** The theme may be anything you wish – serious or whimsical, childlike or elegant, antique or modern, rustic or polished, woodland or seashore, represent any country, any season. The fairy houses aren't required to be “houses” at all. They may be boats, gardens, rooms, or any environment where one might find a fairy. One of the books in the *Fairy Houses* series is *Fairy Boats*.

And fairies are timeless; therefore fairy spas or fairy spaceships are acceptable. Do vocations or avocations inspire any ideas?

**Animal considerations.** The neighborhood where the fairy houses will be displayed is shared with birds, squirrels, bunnies, woodchucks, and other possibly mischievous or hungry creatures. A pumpkin makes an excellent basic fairy house structure, but also a tasty snack for woodchucks. So unless you know a way of making food items unappealing to critters, it is better to avoid them. Please also consider whether you need to provide some overnight protection for your creation.

**Valuable items.** Rarely does theft or vandalism during the tours, but it is best not to use any items that one values in any way.

### **Fairy House References (many of these books are available at local bookstores and libraries, and at The Nature Museum)**

*Fairy Houses, Fairy Boat, and Fairy Flight* by Tracy Kane. These provide general background information and provided the inspiration for the tours.

*Fairy Houses Everywhere!* and *Fairy Houses & Beyond* by Barry and Tracy Kane. Almost entirely photographs of fairy houses and fairy house details, many from past tours. (The Museum has some copies of these to loan.)

*Fairy Island* by Laura C. Martin and Cameron Martin. Fairy accessories and instructions for making them.

[www.fairyhouses.com](http://www.fairyhouses.com) – contains photos of many fairy houses on previous tours as well as photos of the visitors and information on fairy house tours.

[www.nature-museum.org](http://www.nature-museum.org) - has pictures from many of past entries at its Fairy House Tours and also a suggested reading list.

### **Examples of items used in fairy house construction and embellishment**

Twigs, hollow logs, tree roots	Pine cones, pine needles
Bark, birch is excellent	Fungus
Grasses	Sea grass, seaweed
Flowers (fresh or dried)	Sand
Seed pods (especially milkweed), dried seed heads	Straw
Rocks/pebbles	Shells
Driftwood	Feathers
Fur/hair	Bones
Nuts (especially their shells)	Moss
Gourds	Roots
Leaves	Corn husks/cobs
Cattails (pick early in the year if you don't want them to open) or bulrushes	
Bark covered with moss or lichen	
Natural sponge	

### **Extra Materials**

If you have materials left over that you would like to contribute to the area where public participants will build houses the day of the tour, we would be delighted to accept your donations.