

Guidelines & recommendations: Faerie Homes & Gardens

The goal of a Faerie Home & Garden entry is to construct a miniature habitat that could be home to a real woodland creature. The magic is to have everything to scale (for all features to be represented in proportional dimensions); think very small- faeries tend to be the size of butterflies and caterpillars. Through the construction process you will experience landscape design and getting closer to nature. Faerie Homes & Gardens, though small in size, are huge in possibilities!

Base & core materials:

Mounting your home to a base up to 4' square in size is a good thing to do if you have miniature items and outdoor features, such as ponds, swings, gardens, fountains or glass bead streams. Large tree cookies (a cross section of a tree stump) or plywood are both strong materials to serve as a base. The most popular homes use natural materials as the core of the structure, such as tree stumps, hollowed logs, large branches, or chunks of tree bark from a decaying tree. If you choose to use man-made materials as a base, make sure they are completely covered by natural materials such as pebbles, moss, or shells. Having multiple layers of plant and natural materials to mask the underlying structure is key in keeping your structure from being discovered.

Adhesives:

The trick with adhesives is to avoid moisture getting behind the materials you attach. Not all types of adhesives work; we have seen and experienced glue failures from adhesives such as- wood glue, Elmer's glue, and hot glue guns. If you're attaching items to a porous material, you may want to spray on a product to seal the pores first, such as with Outdoor ModPodge®. The more resilient adhesives are silicone caulk or polyurethane, but these require extended cure times. (Parental supervision is recommended for the use of stronger adhesives).

Plant materials:

Families and designers really enjoy using a variety of natural materials such as sticks, twigs, seed pods and acorn caps for crafting faerie furniture such as benches, swinging chairs, tables, tea sets, chandeliers, ladders, and fencing. Be aware that much of the construction using nuts and berries gets carried away by animals. To be environmentally friendly, we ask that you not use berries or seeds of invasive species like Nandina, China Berry or Chinese Tallow. Staff will ask participants to remove any seeds of invasive species that are incorporated into the design. (Successful alternatives are Juniper berries, Buckeye seeds, TX Mt. Laurel seeds, Bald Cypress cones, acorn caps, etc.)

Plant species:

The care of faerie home landscaping will be very limited. Any live plants installed will need to have your weekly attention, or be able to thrive with limited water such as cacti, succulents, & drought-tolerant herbs. We encourage the use of native pollinator plants to invite butterflies into your faerie garden as many of the exhibits back up to the butterfly trail.

Pollinator Habitat:

Faerie Homes and Gardens are designed to invite creatures of all forms- from the magical, to some of the most beneficial of wildlife species such as pollinators. A great way to invite pollinators into your Faerie Home is to plant pollinator species such as Gregg's Mistflower and Milkweed. A helpful database for pollinator plant species can be found here-

http://www.wildflower.org/collections/collection.php?collection=TX_central

Another approach to attracting pollinators is by creating "Insect Hotel" features in your Faerie Home for bugs to lay their eggs and to protect them from the elements such as the rain and direct sun. A helpful write-up on Insect Hotels can be found here-

<http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/sites/birmingham.live.wt.precedenthost.co.uk/files/Insect%20Hotel.pdf>

Installation:

You will be contacted individually via phone beginning the week of May 7th to schedule a time to install your faerie home during regular business hours the week of May 18th – 25th. Once you have met with the Faerie Trail Coordinator to sign-off on your assigned location, you are welcome to decorate your home at your convenience leading up to the opening of the Woodland Faerie Trail Exhibit on Saturday, May 26th 2017. We recommend bringing a cart or wagon along to assist you with moving your home from your vehicle to your assigned site.

Judging:

This year the exhibit will be judged by the Capital Area Judges Council, who are trained in floral design and are in charge of judging our plant shows here at ZBG that take place inside the Garden Center Building. In addition to the Judges Council, there will also be "People's Choice" awards for visitors to judge as they are discovering the faerie trail. Some of the categories for judging will be: Best use of Color, Best use of Plant Materials, Best use of Living Plants, Best use of Pollinator Habitat, Best use of Miniature Scale, and Best use of Artful Design. The "People's Choice" awards for each month will be tallied up at the end of June and July to be announced via social-media. The award winners of the month of June will be recognized on the trail with a ribbon on the signage designating Faerie Home Entries.

Maintenance:

Faerie Homes and Gardens are exposed to all of the elements—rain, potential floods, heat, potential drought, and wildlife—as well as the curious hands of many children. Faerie homes are placed 2-3 feet off the trail to minimize touching, but there are still wear and tear impacts on installations. We ask participants to come and check on their home throughout the nine weeks that the exhibit runs (May 26th- August 10th). If you are unavailable, you are welcome to send someone in your place to make sure everything is nice and tidy. Garden entry fee is waived for participants coming in to maintain their faerie homes. We are also offering an "Adopt-a-Faerie-Home" program for groups that are interested in coming in to volunteer to help tidy up faerie homes along the trail. If your group is interested in signing up for the "Adopt-a-Faerie-Home" program, please contact our Woodland Faerie Trail Coordinator at Chris.Sanchez@austintexas.gov or call 512-477-8672 xt.13