

TIPS for Making Fairy and Gnome Houses (for all ages)

Consider the fairy or gnome character:

Who is the fairy or gnome that you believe will inhabit your house? Remember that there are many types of fairies!

Is he/she slow? Fast? Talkative? Quiet? Does he/she like visitors, or is he/she more of a hermit? Is he/she a bit of a hoarder? Is he/she a neatnik? Be sure to add everything you can imagine THIS fairy or gnome would need. You can start by imagining what YOU WOULD like: clothes, food, and furniture. Now imagine what a fairy would need.

If you are making the fairy house for OUTSIDE:

Don't use plastic, duct tape, staple gun, hot glue gun, or anything that will make the fairy house intentionally permanent, or a possible hazard to wildlife. Songbirds, small rodents, amphibians, in addition to gnomes, may get stuck or injured on staples, sticky glue or duct tape.

Keep the house small. If it is too big, no fairy or gnome would not want to live there, because it will be too obvious. A fairy house that sticks out will also attract trolls, or other predators, which hurt fairies and gnomes.

Make sure you keep it somewhere animals such as pets don't pee or make a turd on the house so keep it a bit high but not too high.

If building in the woods, outside of your garden or backyard, be sure to use only natural and found objects (e.g. shells, tree litter, twigs, bark that has fallen off of the tree), or things that have washed up on shore at the beach (e.g. wine corks, sea glass, pieces of rope).

If you choose to put flowers or mushrooms inside the fairy house, remember that while mushrooms and flowers may attract fairies while they are fresh, once they are old, fairies may avoid them, especially if they smell bad.

Make sure you build your house in a quiet place, perhaps a corner, under a bush, but hidden. You don't want to scare your fairies or gnomes by too much noise.

If you are making a fairy house in a garden, remember that it will fall back to nature unless you have used water resistant glues. Make sure the glue is totally dry.

If you are making the fairy house for INSIDE:

You may wish to use all sorts of materials, including plastics and recyclables. Remember, there are many types of fairies! If there are any in your area, they've probably already ventured inside!

Often fairies and gnomes like glitter, or things that catch the light. That's why placing the house in a window is very nice.

Be careful not to use things that have sharp edges, as these can hurt fairies just as they may hurt people.

Foodstuffs that tend to get smelly and moldy are not good for indoor OR outdoor fairy and gnome houses.

Principles of Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.

Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.

Emphasis is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.

Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.

Pattern is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.

Repetition works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.

Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.

Rhythm is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.

Variety is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.

Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.

Suggested materials and supplies for Fairy and Gnome Houses

This list is based upon the annual Fairy and Gnome Workshops devised for children by Laura Larsen at the Russell Library and for adults by Ann Smith and Rolande Duprey.

Adhesives:

Our adult group was very comfortable using hot glue. Children groups use exclusively white school glue.

We also had acetone-based adhesive on hand for the adults (“Magna-Tac” or “Fabri-Tac”), but this is only to be used in very small amounts with a great deal of open space and air-venting.

Tools:

Scissors are the most important! You will need scissors that cut through lightweight twigs and other pieces of natural fibers. If you have a lot of branches, you may wish to include stronger cutting or lopping tools.

For Indoor Fairy Houses:

The base may be a piece of cardboard, or a “pizza round”, with another piece of cardboard folded into an “A” frame roof, glued onto the base.

A large piece of flat rock or slate may also form a base on which to build the house.

Clean rocks, pebbles, twigs, branches, bark, and other objects from outside can be used.

Silk flowers, plastic beads, milk bottle tops, various figurines, puzzle pieces, old game parts, stickers, clothespins, thread spools, fabric and yarn scraps, and other recyclables such as egg cartons and yogurt cups.

For Outdoor Fairy Houses:

If you wish the fairy house to last longer, use a base of stone or wood. We used old slate roof tiles that had been thrown away.

The roofs or lean-tos of the houses can be made of sticks or bark or other natural objects.

Seed pods, pine cones, twigs, dried mushrooms, pebbles, rocks, seashells, acorns, leaves, and any other natural fiber or found object from the natural world.

Avoid any type of object that will break and provide sharp edges (such as glass figurines or pieces of bottles, etc.).