

How We Paint Gnome Homes on Rocks

On the Columbia Trail from High Bridge to Califon, New Jersey, there are a lot of gnome homes. Most are made by or for the children, to engage them with nature, get them out into the environment, and to connect them with the fanciful world of gnomes.

The majority of the gnome homes are made of wood and therefore quickly deteriorate in the humid, sheltered conditions of the trail. My friends and I got the idea to paint gnome homes on rocks from the local landfill. We paint, seal, and place them in a village that is called Harmony Hill. We encourage others to do the same, placing them at the Harmony Hill site, along the Columbia Trail, or in their own backyards.

Here's what you need:

1. A rock the size of a lunchbox, or smaller for your own yard
2. Craft paints
3. Paint brushes
4. A palette such as a paper plate or piece of plastic
5. Spray sealant
6. Water to wash the rock and to wash the paint brushes
7. Paper towels

Here are the steps:

1. Wash the rock and let it dry.
2. Decide how you would like to paint it – which part is the roof, how it will sit in the environment. Make a sketch if you wish.
3. Determine if you are going to have windows or doors. We often paint the window glass to look like a light is on inside the house, a soft light yellow or off white paint works well.
4. It works well to paint all the light areas first, and then the door.
5. Next paint the siding of the house and the roof. Be sure to paint as far around as you need to for the house to be seen from all sides. When we paint for Harmony Hill we don't have to paint the backs because the hill is so steep, but we do paint the sides.
6. We often put shutters and trim around the windows and doors once the first layers of paint are dry.
7. Sometimes we can paint a chimney on the side of the house or the roof.
8. Don't forget the doorknob and the hinges on the door.
9. Some people like to paint flowers on the wall, or rocks in front, or a doorbell. It's all up to you!
10. When it is dry, it is best to spray the entire house with sealant so it lasts longer outside.
11. Place it wherever you wish, hiding behind a tree, in a rock garden, under some flowers, or start a village of your own!

Because Harmony Hill is on a hillside that has a big tree over it, nothing grows there. We decided to paint some tall skinny rock to look like pine trees. Other rocks have been painted like flowers and gardens. Use your imagination! We also have a heart-shaped rock that we call the heart of the village. We have three different caves for the gnomes to work in, just like the seven dwarves in Snow White. The Gnomes are happy with all the attention. They are really glad that we are having fun making homes for them.

We hope you have fun too!

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