

Trail Construction Guidelines

These guidelines outline the steps necessary to create a nature trail to the national and state park standards. It is my hope in offering these guidelines that the Long Range Planning Board and Town Council will utilize these guidelines to construct a network of trails throughout our Town, connecting neighborhood parks, the Community Center, Town Hall and other locations for the enjoyment and health of all our citizens.

I have also filed a copy of my Eagle Scout Project Notebook with the Town Clerk so you will have a very detailed explanation of exactly how to construct future trails. While I cannot pledge my fellow scouts to working for the town, I would encourage you to contact my troop – Boy Scout Troop 342 based at Bethlehem Methodist Church in Climax, which has many Pleasant Garden residents as members – as well as contacting other Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops in the area. I'm sure that fellow and future scouts would be happy to earn their service hours by contributing to our community, as I have.

The two keys to constructing trails are: extensive, detailed planning; and obtaining enough volunteer labor. Specifically, the steps to building a trail are:

1. Walk out the area and mark the trail with yellow caution tape, keeping each tape within sight of the next. Get a topographical map of the area, mark major nearby landmarks, and mark out the planned trail on the map, with approximate distances for each segment. The map will probably change somewhat as you cut around obstacles during construction, but at least you will have a clear idea from the start where you are going. The winter would be the best time to walk the area, since the vegetation is not thick, so you can more easily see and mark where you want to go.
2. Plan out all the materials, tools, labor, workday schedules and other items you will need. Be sure to include safety precautions, provision to remove any environmental hazards and debris you encounter, and drink supplies (especially water) for your workers.
3. Starting in the Spring, blaze the trail by lining up fallen logs and trees from yellow caution tape to tape, lining them approximately four feet wide, but try to avoid cutting down any live trees, even if it means that the trail may vary from the original plan or narrowing the trail at certain points.
4. Have a number of people pulling up weeds and vines behind those lining the trail. This is an important part of trailblazing. Also, have chain saws and axes at hand to cut through fallen trees. Also be sure to cut back any branches either sticking into the new path or hanging too low.

5. Follow up all the weed pulling with weedkiller (Clorox is a great, low cost alternative). The toughest part of trailblazing in our town is getting the weeds and vines killed.
6. Contact Duke Power and local tree services to obtain free mulch. It is best to mulch the trails for the entire width of the path and at least 4 inches deep to provide for easy walking.
7. To connect woods trails throughout the town you will probably have to construct sidewalks along some roads and possibly obtain right-of-ways between or behind some houses to reach some neighborhood parks. I was told that the state has a fund that the town can apply to for funding these items, as well as for funding benches, exercise stations and other trail enhancements.
8. I suggest that the town develop a nature guide as well as a map for each trail, so people will know the types of things to look for and expect on each trail. The Town Clerk can be responsible for keeping extra copies of all the trail maps and guides, and for the townwide trails guide that you develop.
9. Please check my Trail Maintenance Guide for other items that need to be addressed during construction.
10. Most importantly, enjoy working on the trail and spending some time enjoying the nature around you while you work!