

BAREFOOT TRAIL

Barefoot walking over a variety of outdoor materials can produce many different sensations: soft sand; crumbly gravel; smooth, flat pebbles warmed by the sun or the moist, slippery, bark of a fallen tree trunk. A child becomes so much more aware of their own body when negotiating these different surfaces. It stimulates the arches of the feet and encourages more focus on balance and movement, thus supporting the development of better posture which can endure. Walking barefoot over uneven surfaces can equally contribute to the correction of flat footedness as the child is compelled to position their feet correctly under such conditions.

Definition

A barefoot trail is a short pathway created from a variety of surface materials. Ideally it should be a twisting route rather than straight with elements at differing heights from the ground. The experience of walking barefoot not only stimulates the senses and neuro-motoric

development but also strengthens our connectivity with nature.

Procedure

Decide the location of the trail with a good start and end point. Ideally it should be located in partial shade away from prevailing weather conditions. Design the shape of the trail and determine the range of materials to be used. It would also be useful to have somewhere to hang shoes at the beginning.

To create the trail dig out a trench, flatten this and line the edges with stones or logs. To make it a more permanent feature and afford it more protection you may want to embed the trail in concrete. Otherwise, use weed suppressant membrane to line the trench and then back fill



with your chosen surface materials. You may want to have logs separating different individual surface types. Remember that

some surfaces will wear down over time and need replenishing.

Tips

- If you use logs to edge the trail treat them first with wood protective paint to prolong their life span.
- Periodically rotate the individual parts of the sensory path.
- During the winter you can remove the materials from the trail into shallow containers or boxes to preserve them for longer and use them as a 'pop-up' barefoot trail on a tarpaulin as and when required.

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