HIDING YOUR FIRST GEOCACHE

Source: https://www.geocaching.com/about/hiding.aspx (Reprinted by permission of Geocaching.com)

Step 1—Research a Cache Location

Geocaching is just like real estate—location, location, location! It is common for geocachers to hide caches in locations that are important to them, reflecting a special interest or skill of the cache owner. These unique locations on the planet can be quite diverse. A prime camping spot, great viewpoint, unusual location, etc., are all good places to hide a cache.

When thinking about where to place a cache, keep these things in mind:

- Does it meet all requirements and Geocache Listing Guidelines to be listed on Geocaching.com? (See www.geocaching.com/about/guidelines.aspx.) Make sure to review these during your research. Issues of concern include cache saturation, commerciality, solicitation, and long-term cache maintenance.

- Did you consider accessibility? If it is too visible or too close to busy roads and trails, there is a good chance someone may stumble upon it by accident. It is best to place a cache just off trail to preserve the environment but keep it out of sight of people casually passing by.

- Did you seek permission from the land owner or manager? If you place a cache on private land, you must ask permission before hiding your cache. If you place it on public lands, contact the land manager to find out about any rules or restrictions.

- Will the location placement cause unnecessary concern? Please use common sense when choosing a location for your cache. Do not design your cache such that it might be confused with something more dangerous.

You are ultimately responsible for the cache, so make sure you know the rules for the area where your cache is being placed. Respect the area around your chosen location. Keep in mind that others will be walking in these areas.

- If it's the location of a wild animal nest, or if it is off-trail with delicate ground cover, too much activity may damage the very nature of why this area is cool.

- Do not place caches on archaeological or historical sites. In most cases these areas are highly sensitive to the extra traffic that would be caused by vehicles and humans.

- A cache hidden in full view of office or apartment building windows exposes a geocacher to being seen by someone who may think the cache search looks suspicious.

Step 2—Preparing Your Cache

Cache Containers

Start by choosing a container that will withstand the weather all year round. Geocachers have had good success with clear, watertight containers. Whatever the container, make sure to clearly identify your cache as a geocache. Most geocachers mark the cache container with the words "Official Geocache," the name of the cache, and appropriate contact information. The more information you can provide, the better.

Cache Contents

Next, you will need a logbook. If the container is big enough, consider placing a writing utensil in the cache as well. If you are in an area where the temperature drops below freezing, make sure to provide a soft lead pencil. Pens tend to freeze and are rendered useless.

Include a note to welcome the cache finder. The note, available at www.geocaching.com/seek/default.aspx, can be translated into several languages and explains the activity in case someone accidentally finds your cache.

Lastly, you can put items for trading into the cache. It is highly recommended, but not necessary. What you place into your cache is up to you, budget permitting. Some ideas of items to give as goodies:

- Toys for children (action figures, games, playing cards, etc.)
- Trackable items (See www.geocaching.com/track/default.aspx.)

People of all ages hide and seek caches, so think carefully before placing an item into a cache. Do not place items such as explosives, ammunition, knives, drugs, and alcohol in a cache. Respect the local laws.

Food items are always a bad idea. Animals have better noses than humans, and in some cases caches have been chewed through and destroyed because of food items in a cache. Do not put food in a cache.

Step 3—Placing Your Cache

Once you arrive at the location of your hide, it is critical to obtain accurate GPS coordinates. This is the very heart of the activity, after all. Be aware that during bad weather, the accuracy of the GPS unit may be poor.

Some GPS units have the ability to take an average set of coordinates. If your device cannot, it is best to mark a waypoint, walk away from the location, then return and mark another waypoint. Continue marking waypoints at the location, around seven to 10 times, and then select the best waypoint.

Once you have your waypoint, write it in permanent marker on the container and in the logbook. Make sure you have a copy to bring back with you. Write a few notes in the logbook if you like, place it in a zippered plastic bag for extra protection, and place it in the cache container.

Step 4—Submitting Your Cache

Take time to review the Geocache Listing Guidelines again. After placing your cache, does it still meet all requirements for placement? If so, fill out the online form at www.geocaching.com/hide/createcache.aspx, paying careful attention to the helpful notes provided. Write a description that attracts geocachers to your location, including images of interest.

Add descriptive attributes so that others can make a quick assessment of your cache. (See www.geocaching.com/about/icons.aspx.) For example, is this area dog-friendly? Is the hike over an hour long? Is the area accessible in a wheelchair? Is a boat required?

Double check the accuracy and the format of your work and make any needed edits. A community volunteer will review your cache listing before it is published for the general public.

Step 5—Maintaining Your Cache

Cachers will expect your cache to remain in place for a realistic and extended period of time. Once you place the cache, it is your responsibility to maintain the cache and the area around it. You will need to return regularly to ensure that your cache is not impacting the area negatively, and to check that the container is in good shape.

Does the area look disturbed? Are visitors disrupting the landscape in any way? If you eventually have concerns about the location, remove the container and make appropriate changes to your online listing.

Happy Geocaching!