

## Why Build a Nesting Site?

Turtles have been nesting and hatching on their own for millions of years. But because of human activity, turtles are losing natural nesting sites or must risk crossing roads to access them. You can help female turtles and their hatchlings by creating a nesting habitat on your property.



Photo of a finished nesting site, courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

**Only build a nesting site on your own property!**

### Did You Know?

- In southern Ontario, you cannot travel more than 2 kilometres (1.25 miles) without reaching a road! By providing nesting sites away from roadways, we hope to lower the risk of turtle deaths.
- Not only is it against the law to dig up a turtle's nest, but you are likely to harm any eggs or hatchlings in the nest. Many turtles overwinter in their nest and have the best chance of surviving if left undisturbed.



If you find an injured turtle, call us immediately!

**705-741-5000**

## We need your help

Donations are critical to our ability to continue helping Ontario's turtles. OTCC is a registered charity, and relies on donations for our essential conservation work. Donations to the OTCC are always welcome and all go towards turtle conservation.

Visit [ontarioturtle.ca/donation-options](http://ontarioturtle.ca/donation-options) to find out how to support us financially.



**ONTARIO TURTLE**  
CONSERVATION CENTRE

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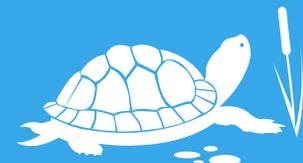
705-741-5000



The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on the treaty and traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg. We offer our gratitude to the First Peoples for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations.

*The legal name of OTCC is the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre.  
Charitable Registration # 85752 4409 RR0001*

## How to build a Turtle Nesting Site on your property



**ONTARIO TURTLE**  
CONSERVATION CENTRE

# Safe nesting habitats greatly increase the odds of the hatchlings' survival

## Choose a Suitable Location

Choose a location with full sun exposure, ideally facing south, to receive maximum warmth from the sun. Not only is the temperature crucial for proper development, but moisture levels are too. There must be no chance of the site flooding.

Ideally the nesting site should be at least 6 x 6 metres (20 x 20 feet), but you can scale this down to 3 x 3 metres (10 x 10 feet) if necessary.

To increase the survival chances of hatchlings, a nesting site should be within 100 metres (325 feet) of a wetland and have no barriers between the site and the wetland. If possible, choose a location near known nesting sites so that returning females can easily find the new site.

Lastly, the nesting site must be far away from human activity such as housing developments, ATV trails, playgrounds and picnic areas.

### Think Like a Turtle

Turtles are picky about where they lay their eggs – and for good reason. To maximize survival of the eggs and hatchlings, a turtle nest should have:

- Full sun exposure
- Close proximity to water
- Good drainage
- Substrate that holds heat

*Good potential location for artificial nesting site.*



## Prepare the Site

### Remove vegetation

Vegetation must be sparse, with only native species of sedges, grasses and a few low shrubs. Remove excess vegetation to expose the underlying soil. If the area is heavily covered, remove the top layer of soil to prevent re-growth.

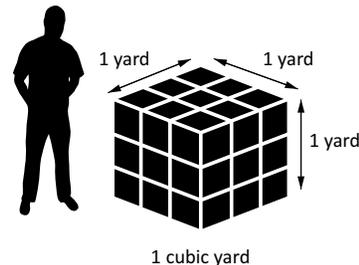
### Layer nesting materials

Add a layer of pea gravel about 5 to 15 centimetres (2 to 6 inches) deep. Next, add a mixture of 60% granular "A" gravel and 40% sand, to a total depth of about 30 centimetres (12 inches). Finally, form the material into an irregularly shaped mound, providing a variety of slope angles and conditions for nesting.

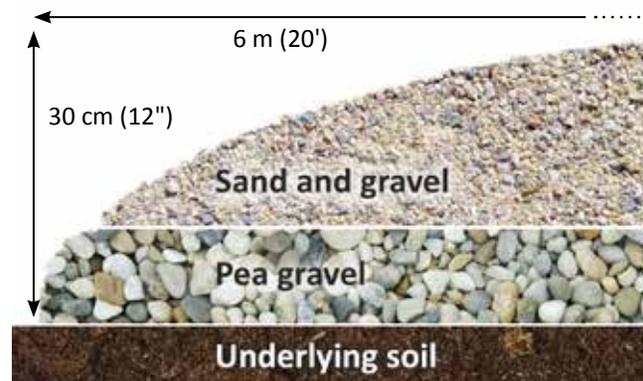
For a 6 x 6 metre (20 x 20 foot) area, you will need:

- Pea gravel, 4 cubic metres (5 cubic yards)
- Granular "A" gravel, 4.5 cubic metres (5.5 cubic yards)
- Sand, 3 cubic metres (4 cubic yards)

*Quantities are approximate.*



*Materials such as sand and gravel are often sold by the "yard" which means a cubic yard.*



## Maintenance

Inspect the nest site at least every two years. Thin vegetation so it covers at most 25% of the mound. Remove any non-native plants and trim shrubs to a maximum height of 60 centimetres (2 feet).



A small amount of plant cover provides hiding spots for females and newly hatched turtles. Too much vegetation prevents turtles from nesting and limits the sun exposure required for proper hatchling development.



## Nest Protectors

Increase hatchlings' survival chances even more with a nest protector.

If you see a nesting turtle, note the location and then give her lots of space. Come back later and install a nest protector.

OTCC sells nest protectors and also provides instructions to build your own.

Visit our website or call us at 705-741-5000 to order your nest protector.