

# The Magical World of SLEEPY HOLLOW



Art Millican works in his studio creating the fairy houses sold in the Sleepy Hollow gift shop. Everything in this magical world is designed and made by the former Disney artist and craftsman.





Do you believe in fairies? Art Millican, Jr. does, and has for his whole life and career. He believes in fairies so strongly that he has built a beautiful place for them to live in the mountains of North Georgia.

Sleepy Hollow is called by its creator an "enchanted park and gardens hidden away in plain sight." Located on Highway 76 between Young Harris and Blairsville, Ga., the fairy garden invites visitors and kids of all ages to come and be transported to a make-believe place where fairies could possibly be found behind any shrub or bush; where the cares of the modern world can be left behind for at least a few hours.

# SLEEPY HOLLOW

Driving up the hill at Sleepy Hollow, visitors pass along the edge of the fairy village. At the top of the drive a gate opens to steps leading back down through the village. Small doors invite tiny hands to search for the shy fairies who might be hiding inside these child-sized structures with colorful façades and intriguing angles. Fanciful creatures, hand-crafted by Art, dangle from branches or the

eaves of the houses, or are nestled in nooks and crannies.

Farther down the steps is a view across a hollow with a number of possible hide-outs for the elusive fairies, including hobbit houses. Across the driveway from the village is a gypsy trailer that beguiles children, while up the hill is a cockeyed fairy house with curious angles beckoning folks to explore.

All of these things are set in beautifully landscaped gardens created by Art's father, Arthur, who came to Sleepy Hollow from Massachusetts, where he was the owner of



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one of the country's largest floral centers. Now in his 80s, he also makes all of the whirligigs that are displayed here and there throughout the garden.

Colorful birdhouses, fairy doors, wooden hand-cranked toys and other whimsical art are all created in the workshop behind the shop that sells them. Art says it takes about two weeks to make a dozen or so of the houses, as they are quite labor-intensive. The molds and casts for the fairy doors are also made in the workshop. The small, ingenious mechanical toys, known as automata, usually have to be custom ordered because of the work involved.

After starting as a teenage popcorn vendor on Main Street in Disney World, Orlando, Fla., Art moved into a successful career as a senior artist and craftsman with Disney. More recently, Art ran his own company and was involved in the design and creation of other international Disney projects, including ones in Tokyo and Europe, as well as Michael Jackson's Neverland.

Art then decided it was time for the more peaceful mountains of North Georgia that he had come to know and

love over the years. Thirteen years ago he bought his land and began to build his own dream: a fairy garden. The beautiful hillside is also home to Art and his wife, Wendi, along with his parents, Arthur Sr. and Pat Millican – and, of course, the fairies who inhabit the land with them.

This family enterprise involves not only the creative genius of Art and his father, but also the participation of his wife, Wendi, who, along with Art's mother, Pat, runs the store. The combined efforts of these four have transformed this mountain property into a magical place for their family and for the thousands of families who visit. Since Art's background with Disney and his continuing work for them – as well as for Dollywood and Six Flags – has to do with architectural models, his quirky habitats catch the eye and stimulate the imagination.

There is no admission charge to wander in the fairy village or meander around the other areas. Guests are invited to visit the store to purchase some of the magic to take home with them. As the Sleepy Hollow brochure says, "Invite fairies to visit your garden by giving them a house all their own." The houses come in all sizes, from 12 inches to 4 feet, and vary in price accordingly, starting from \$19. The colorful birdhouses mimic the fairy houses in their construction and are popular sellers.

Another suggestion is to buy one of the fairy doors to place on a baseboard within your home, giving indoor access to the mysterious fairies. The basic doors cost about \$15, but if they are hinged to open, they are \$25. For those visitors whose imagination is stimulated, the retail store also carries a plentiful supply of all of the art materials needed to create personal fairy gardens: paints, brushes, canvases, books, pads and pencils.

Driving along U.S. Highway 76 about 5 miles east of Blairsville, you can't miss the colorful entrance. Pull in and drive up the hill to see all that awaits. Prepare to be impressed and charmed with the delights of Sleepy Hollow. Of course always be on the lookout for the wary fairies who may be roaming freely on the grounds.

Sleepy Hollow is open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Call 706-379-9622 for directions, or visit the website at [www.whimsicalfairygarden.com](http://www.whimsicalfairygarden.com). A magical treat awaits at this enchanted place in Union County. ♦



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