



BUILDING A SENSORY TRAIL



"I can do anything"

www.413therapeuticriding.com

A **SENSORY RIDING TRAIL** is a purpose-built rich learning environment where therapeutic riding programs riders can experience a range of senses in association with the movement of riding a horse. Riding paths that consist of slopes, turns, varied footing, natural sights and sounds, and man-made activity stations challenges the riders' balance and encourages them to interact with the world around them.

A sensory riding trail helps to stimulate most standard senses:

LOOKING AND SEEING

Outdoor plants provide colour changing throughout the seasons, the contrast of shade and light pattern of surrounding structures.

LISTENING AND HEARING

Sounds, including horses' hooves on gravel, birds,....

FEELING AND TOUCHING

Exploring horse's hair, body temperature, different texture surfaces, and the weight of different objects

ORIENTATION/ GRAVITY/ BALANCE

Path designs can change direction, up and down slopes, over poles, wide or narrow in places

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Interactive sculptures, games


MOODS


Path designs can change the mood from neutral (quiet and relaxing) to stimulating (e.g. what can we find over the turn?)

BENEFITS TO THE RIDER

 A sensory riding trail can provide various benefits, including:

 Increasing a rider's independence

 Improving their bilateral coordination

 Developing better left/right discrimination

 Introducing learning activities in conjunction with the senses

 Improving a rider's language and communication by promoting conversation

BUILDING A SENSORY RIDING TRAIL: PHASE I

4:13 Therapeutic Riding Association (4:13TRA) is keen to create an outdoor area for our riders, one that offers something different to our regular riding sessions in the outdoor and indoor arenas.

4:13TRA started exploring sensory trails, their construction and design in 2016. This led to the early decision to build the trail in a loop around the High Country Equestrian Center, focusing on different sections of the riding areas to stimulate a variety of the Rider's senses and most importantly on safety for the riders, volunteers and horses.

Considering building costs and timeline it is planned to complete **Phase I** (see picture below) first and then continue to Phase II that would include trail around entire property.



4:13TRA SENSORY TRAIL. PHASE I



STAGE 1: *Exploring different types of terrain*

4:13TRA is planning to start the sensory trail on the paved road leading from indoor arena to the main entrance to the barn, followed by the grassy road towards the outdoor riding arena. Along the outdoor riding arena and property fence area would consist of rounded pebbles on a flat surface surrounded with bushes on either side of the walk. This stage would help riders

experience both audio sensations – from the noise of the paved road, grass and pebbles against the hooves and movement of leaves - as well as the physical sensation of the horse walking over a different type of terrain.



To complete the first stage, we would need the following:

The large amount of pebbles

Dig out the area

Spread the pebbles out

Bushes (55)



STAGE 2: *The Tunnel*

The sensory trail would continue towards the entrance of the Middle field crossing gravel road and soft slope. As the second stage of the sensory trail trellis tunnel along the fence dividing the Middle Field and South Field and the Pump house would be built for the rider and volunteers to walk through, complete with a concrete or alternate hard floor to provide an alternate riding surface. On the interior of the tunnel shapes and colours would be placed for the rider to stop and interact with, with the various visual cues again promoting conversation and education. Safety is paramount for this section of the sensory trail therefore pathways should be at least 3 meters in length, to comfortably fit both the volunteers and a mounted rider. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that the height clearance is sufficient to accommodate the tallest rider/ volunteers.

To complete the third stage, we would need the following:

Concrete or alternative material

Trellis/ lumber

Three rail fence (estimated 900 feet/ \$10.50)

2 Gates

Manual labor pouring the concrete/ building the tunnel and fence



STAGE 3: *The Bridge*

At the end of the Middle Field, the sensory trail would turn to the right-hand side and continue through the South Field towards the Fence-line Paddock.

Since area where the South Field end and the Alley begins is lower than the rest of the field, instead of trying to drain it, an alternative of forming a creek came to attention. Therefore, the most ambitious stage is foreseen to be a man-made creek with a bridge over it which would provide a different set of physical sensations for the rider as they moved from the grassy ground onto the wooden bridge. It would also provide many opportunities for visual and audio stimulation with the help of newly planted trees and bushes.

To complete the second stage, we would need the following:

Landscaping rocks

Large amount of lumber

Manual labor constructing the bridge and landscaping the creek

Trees and bushes



STAGE 4: *The Hills*

Following the Bridge, the Sensory trail would continue into the Fence-line paddock, the only treed area that would allow building various sculptures and objects hidden in the trees for the rider to spot. Presence of two small hills in the Fence-line paddock suggested the fourth part of the sensory riding trail which would be two rounded hills with three sizable slopes for the rider to conquer and give the sense of gravity and balance,

complimented by the olfactory sensations being stimulated by planting of plants at various points near the hill.

To complete the fourth stage, we would need the following:

Large amount of clean-fill

Digger to re-shape the area

Construction elements to help keep the elevated area stable

Plants

Sculptures (see Appendix I)



Professional builders labor

STAGE 5: *The maze*

Last stage of Phase I would be the maze – colorful and stimulating area that would require the rider to make decisions and react accordingly, e.g. determining the angle of the horse when riding around a corner, or switching from left to a right rein when required. After mapping the maze itself, the leveling of the area that is to become the maze would be completed, following with the construction: sturdy posts to be driven into the ground with the plywood walls/ fence panels then secured to these posts.

To complete the last stage, we would need the following:

Sand

Posts

Plywood/ Fence panels

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE GAMES

