Earthing is a way of (re)connecting with the environment. Earthing is a way of remembering our distant and far past. Earthing is a way to recharge our bodies each and every single day.

There are many benefits to earthing:

- Decreased inflammation
- Reduced chronic pain
- Lowered stress
- Improved sleep
- Increased energy and stamina

Perhaps more important than all of that is the ability to provide yourself and your family with compostable shoes made from sustainable resources, because let’s face it – plastic may have found its way into our everyday lives via electronics, chewing gum, polyester and flip-flops, but we can change the future with every step we take.

It is up to our conscience, our consciousness and our handcrafting skills to unbrand our personal lives, embrace self-reliance and take traditional knowledge to a whole new level.

Step with care!

Earthing sandal pattern created by Cheryl Magyar of ForestCreekMeadows
The essence of the earthing sandal is highly dependent on the quality of the rope – the foundation of the sole.

Depending on your location on Earth and resources available locally you should seek out all natural rope, such as braided hemp rope no smaller than 4 mm in thickness.

For a pair of earthing sandals in European size 38 (US 7.5) you will need about 15 meters (49 feet) of 4 mm braided hemp rope. It is always better to overestimate the length of rope needed, than to under buy. Connecting extra pieces may take away from your design and it is not as easy to attach another piece of rope, as it would be to add a new yarn in a knitted garment. However, it is possible to connect shorter pieces with a little ingenuity. Sewing these sandals does involve both creativity and the ability to sew with the flow.

Other materials needed to sew your earthing sandals:

- Natural sewing thread/twine appropriate to the thickness of your rope (hemp, flax, etc.)
- Strong sewing needles (size 1) – your intuition will tell you the right size based on your rope and your sewing thread
- Cardboard or heavy paper for tracing your feet
- Pencil
Tools:

- Sharp scissors
- Needle-nosed pliers (for when it becomes too hard to pull the needle through the rope)
- Courage to make mistakes
- Stamina to keep sewing – it will take a lot of stitches!

Now is the time to jump right in!

Step on your paper and trace your foot like a child – follow closely for the best fit. To make the tightest possible sandal, when you reach the arch take the pencil and reach underneath a little way (more closely resembling the print of your foot in mud or wet sand).

Trace your second foot and notice that they may be different! Shoes are made the same for the convenience of production, not for the comfort of you. Appreciate the shape of each foot and treat them accordingly.

Define your edges by darkening the lines that you want to follow.
Now is an important moment to reflect on how the top of your sandal will look. Draw it on paper, or just imagine it in your mind.

Don’t search for an exact image, just imagine what rope can do – twist, overlap, weave, bend, fold, stretch, shrink...

Think of your rope clothesline, or your grandmother’s if you grew up without one. Think of sails and rope snails, just in case there is any length of leftover rope... for creating a rope toy or two.

Rope is a living thing, it responds to moisture and temperature. It sags then becomes taut again, all in the same day. Get ready to create a pair of shoes that have a character all their own!

Pick a foot. Right or left and make two marks on the outside edge. This will be your starting line.

Measure a length of thread about 75 cm (30”) long and through the eye of the needle, gently nudge the two ends completely through.
Throughout the entire sewing of the sandals, make sure to use shorter lengths of sewing thread - it will make the soles that much stronger!

Whip the end of your rope by starting at least 1 cm (1/4”) from the end. Wrap the thread several times around, going in and out of the core to make the stitches snug. Careful not to get so dense that the needle can no longer pass through – more stitches will come the same way once the rope returns following its own meandering path.

Begin at the heel. Measure the corresponding amount of rope heading up towards the toes and bend it, so that it comes back next to your whipped end. The rope will follow this pattern – back and forth – until the base of the sole is done and it is ready to be secured by going round and round.

With simple stitches, **upwards at an angle** making sure to keep to the center of the rope, keep progressing forward or backward on the sole attaching the rope from one line to the next. You are always sewing on the side where your foot will rest. The side that touches the ground is left unsewn so that only the rope is exposed to the wear and tear of walking, not your stitches.
Don’t make the mistake in thinking that this can be mastered in one day. It can’t. Rope soled shoes are not fast fashion, they are slowly grounding – and they may just become your favorite pair of gardening shoes, next to your own bare feet.


Make sure to check often that the sole is shaping up nicely and fitting the pattern that you traced of your foot. The amount of rows will vary based on how tight you sew, the thickness of your rope and the width of your foot.

**TIP**: Remember to keep an even tension – or your lines will start to curve. Once that starts it is almost impossible to correct. Find a sewing rhythm and keep to it.
Keep filling in your footprint, paying particular attention to every turn of the rope at the toes and the heel – make sure to stitch those ends nice and tight.

When the rows begin to shorten significantly, just keep sewing the rope back and forth.
The art of making shoes is all about the process.

Walk barefoot in the meantime to get a feel for the ground. With thin soled shoes you will feel rocks and pebbles, you will become more intimate with the soil beneath your feet.

Embrace *feeling textures*. These are grounding sandals and they are here to help you reconnect with the Earth. They will get wet, they will get muddy, they will tighten and shrink. They are not plastic-soled name brand shoes, and they are not lesser because of it, in fact they are so much more!

Once you have worn them down to the stitches, you can safely throw them out on your compost pile, or let them decay in the forest or garden. Made from all sustainable materials they will help to save the Earth, just as they assist in making you healthy.
Your individual sewing technique will develop with time and after your first pair of earthing sandals is complete, you may be right onto your second pair.
Beauty is important, but always keep functionality and sustainability in the forefront and a pair of compostable shoes will soon be your future!

Once the sole is finished – start sewing all the way around the base.

Use the same loop stitching as before, growing a little more dense when approaching the valleys. Try not to leave holes, but if there are small ones don’t fret – they will fill in with dirt, clay and small bits of gravel in time and the rope will flatten some under your weight. The sandals will settle into the shape of your footprint with continued wear.

Examine the reverse side to see how the sole is aligned. Go around a minimum of once, twice to be sure before building up the sides. Place your bare foot on the rope sole and make sure it fits perfectly.

The beauty in all of this creative work? There are no specific number of stitches or rows. It is not an exact science. All you are looking for is something that fits the shape of your foot snugly – so remember to set the needle aside and check your progress often.
From the bottom you see one thing, from the top quite another.

As you go around the sole, approach those valleys at the toe and heel with care and add extra stitches where necessary. Scrunch the rope to fit inside and secure with additional strength.
When you get to the heel, begin building up the back with 2 or 3 rows to provide some support for the back of your foot – switch to sewing on the outside of the sandal as you fold the rope over and sew at a 90 degree angle to attach the first row.

Think of the rope like clay. Play with the shape by molding it with your stitches.
An eco-minimalist earthing sandal is naturally lightweight, don’t get carried away by sewing rows and rows – make the shoe fit and the weight will be just enough to walk miles and miles.

After building a couple of heel rows skyward put your honored foot inside and measure around your ankle by attaching a strap. Make it snug, but not too tight, just enough for your foot to comfortably slide in and out. Attach with a few stitches at first to make sure it feels right, as this is more or less a fixed point, it will be hard to tighten it if necessary later on.
Continue sewing around the back of the heel and get ready for the rope to cross over to the other side.

It is important to note that there are no measurements here. Why? Because all our feet are unique and should be treated with respect to their differences. In the coming days and weeks it takes to handcraft your own footwear you will come to understand the beauty of your three-dimensional foot.

Use your intuition, logic and reason to fit the sandal to your body – tapping into style to best reflect your personality. Lay the rope over your foot and feel where it feels good. Stand on your tiptoes and arch your feet. Take a few steps
once the ankle strap is secure... Contemplate. Your handmade shoe is your brand.

Measure more than once is the shoemaker’s rule.

Mock the front as you can imagine the finished sandal – then cut the rope leaving a little extra, being careful not to run out before the finish line.

Ultimately the design is up to you, this pair is simply a suggestion – when you make the matching sandal, of course, make sure they look similar, keeping in mind the direction of the rope as it is worked through your hands.
As you attach the rope to the front of the sandal it is also of importance to create two or three skyward rows – in other words build up the sides to protect your toes and to give the rope sandal more stability.

Approach the finishing of the first sandal with glee!

Cut your rope to its final destination, whip the end and secure it where it lays. Look at the details, then examine it from farther away.

Take your new sandal for a walk!
On the other foot start along the outside edge as before, beginning at the heel. Continue sewing the rows back and forth - it may help to turn it around (holding the starting edge in your left palm with the toes to your belly - as opposed to the left sandal).

Follow your footprint as closely as your rope allows, shorten the rows where necessary. Likewise, increase the length of the rows where your heel and toes call for it.

Appreciate the differences of your feet and if you end up with two rows more on one sandal - then let it be!

Leave some room for your toes to wiggle, but sew to fit.

Measure as you go, the flat rope sole should just fit your footprint before sewing around once or **twice** (adding the edge). If you intend to wear socks, you may consider an additional row around for comfort...
Take a closer look at the bottom of the rope soles. The one on the left is the completed sandal – on the right is the one in progress. It is now ready for sewing around.
When time comes to make the sandals similar, just stand with your feet side by side and visually measure the rope. Always attach with just a few stitches before moving ahead at full steam, making sure that it feels good (tight, snug, comforting) for you.

Stitch density is important – after all you will be standing, walking and running on it, so **sew mindfully**.

Strive for tightness without curling and **refrain from using knots.** Rather, weave the ends of every thread into the rope. The more threads you use, the stronger your sandals will be.
One sandal may weigh more due to an extra row or two, but the difference will be negligible. The point is they turn out similar.
Now that your rope sandals are finished, take your feet for a walk in nature, or show them off in the city.

Then take a break, put your feet up and admire your work!

After your sandals get wet for the first time, they will loosen, so keep some extra thread for adjustments and repairs.

If you are mindful of your steps, when your rope sandals wear out you can safely compost them and slow the flow of plastics into landfills and waterways.
Make earthing sandals for yourself, then a pair for your loved one(s) – meanwhile, harness the energy of the Earth by walking barefoot as often as you can!

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Hemp rope-soled Earthing sandals can be made in any size, from small to large and every shape in between. You can even use oak or naturally tanned leather for extra strength on the outside of the sole, attaching it with as many stitches as necessary.

Time to get outside and get Earthing!