

OUR DAME: Anya Hindmarch's palace date

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GARDEN DESIGN DIRT

Leigh-on-Sea-based **Katrina Kieffer-Wells** of Earth Designs shares her garden expertise



PHOTO: JANTH WATKES

Think about incorporating water into the garden, that can be fun for little ones without the danger



PHOTO: ANNA MOTKOT

Pergolas can have monkey bars as well as giving architectural support to a climber



Consider a sandpit on wheels that can be hidden when not in use



PHOTO: MARCUS HARPER

What are the perfect solutions for a low-maintenance stab at grow your own?

A child-friendly garden for everyone

For many people their childhood garden was a place full of fond memories of seemingly endless summer days and imaginative play.

Over the years, however, the play equipment seems to have grown to dominate outdoor spaces, whether it's a bulky climbing frame or the dreaded trampoline.

As a garden designer, it is often tricky to know how to incorporate children's equipment into the garden, but here are a few ideas of how you can make a space switched-up for the younger members of the family to enjoy, without compromising the aesthetic.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

Much affordable modern garden play equipment can be quite unattractive to adult eyes, relying heavily on moulded plastic and metal in loud primary colours. No matter how beautiful your garden, as soon as you place a vivid yellow slide in the middle of the lawn, it will become the focus of the space.

More elegant timber options often have a price tag to match. Unless it is a design

feature, keep play equipment in the background whenever possible.

Look at ways to hide a slide within a planting bed, or screen off a dedicated play area. In smaller spaces a sandpit on wheels that can be tucked away is a simple solution.

CREATING A PERGOLA

Every child loves a den, whether it is a tent, a sheet over a washing line or hiding under a table. Think about how you might be able to utilise any trees in the garden to create things that can go up and come down quite easily. Too often I find that garden playhouses become outgrown very quickly or a no-go zone because of spiders!

Often in small spaces, we create a timber pergola, which can be used to chuck things over, or hang things on in an *ad hoc* basis to create a simple climbing frame, which can then be taken down when playtime is over.

WATER FOR FUN

Typically, we think that we can't include water features in the garden with children

present. However, water features have moved on a lot and are no longer just ponds. Think about creating a water feature that they can splash in, or do some tipping and pouring, or even low-key Poohsticks! There are many safe water features on the market, which can be enjoyed by both children and adults.

GROW YOUR OWN

Don't be frightened to let your kids actually do some gardening. The joy of field-to-fork, no matter how small-scale, can really whet the appetite for gardening, as well as eating healthily. Don't worry if the idea of a large allotment-style garden terrifies you. Start small. A simple herb garden can bring a lot of joy as well as year-round interest if you include evergreen herbs such as rosemary, sage and a bay tree. ●

Earth Designs are proud members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Association of Professional Landscapers.

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