

# Gardens Are a Magical Part of Family Life!

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Date: Mar 8th 2008

Gardens are a magical part of family life. Some outdoor space, however limited, is a real bonus when you have children. A space to run around in, play with a ball and learn to dig, water and nurture plants is really beneficial to kids growing up.

A good gardener can give you all sorts of ideas for your patch, whether you have a balcony or an acre or two. Just like interior planning, if you have the space you may want to define an area for adults and a separate area for children, as your needs are poles apart. Adults enjoy gardens for relaxation and peace, whereas children use them as areas for free play, for secret dens and for letting off steam.

So what do you need for the perfect children's garden?

Lawns are a great all-purpose garden surface that kids can kick balls across and adults can sunbathe on. Of course they require maintenance - from regular mowing in the Spring and Summer to annual feeding and weeding to keep in tip top condition. Kids running a lot on a lawn can cause bare patches in hot weather and in wet weather mud may become an issue. But there are hard-wearing types of grass on the market. In particular fine-leafed rye grass stands up to heavy use.

When planting up a family garden go for robust plants that will withstand the odd flying football and trampling feet. Delicate plants should be tucked away in borders away from the play area, or in pots. Also beware of poisonous plants that little children may touch. They may even try to chew the flowers and berries. And sharp or thorn plants can cause accidents so keep these to a minimum for an easier life.

Children love discovering how plants grow and adore picking fruit and vegetables that they have cultivated themselves. Spring bulbs, planted in the autumn are very rewarding and fruit and vegetables that are easy to grow include runner beans, tomatoes, lettuces and blueberries. Herbs are also fairly foolproof.

If you have space small children love climbing equipment, swings and hammocks to play in. There are plenty of ready made apparatus available or some gardeners and carpenters will custom make stepping stones, tight ropes, even tree houses! Just make sure that whatever play equipment you use is properly anchored to the ground and that there is a safe landing underneath - grass or bark chippings both work really well.

Other ideas include a sandpit - either built-in or temporary. It should be covered when not being used to keep out rain and animals. Also, get sandpit sand not ordinary sand as it will be much finer and more suitable. A water play table or a paddling pool is also popular but young children will need supervision.

Another major attraction in a family garden is a pond. Children will enjoy the wildlife - insects, plants, fish even frogs. This is best left until children are steady on their feet and have an understanding of water danger. Even a shallow pond can present a risk to a young child.

A child's ideal garden would probably have a secret den - a shady corner, some overgrown

shrubbery or some space behind a tree. Its fun for children to discover these places themselves and claim ownership. But if that's not possible you can buy in alternatives such as a tepee, a tent, or a Wendy house.

An important part of family life is of course eating together and what could be more enjoyable than a bit of al fresco dining? The transitional area between the house and garden is ideal for this - a hard surface like paving or decking provides a good base for tables and chairs and will make mealtimes a real event. Even a picnic on the balcony or lawn is a fun way to enjoy food together - maybe some of it grown and picked by the kids!

Kids love spending time outdoors and whether you have room for two people to sit or vast areas to play in its easy to make the most of the space. Even just hanging a birdfeeder and planting up a couple of pots will bring the outdoors to life for a child.

**About The Author--** Expert [gardener](#) India Cooper explores the magical contribution a garden can make to family life. To find out more please visit <http://www.ratedpeople.com/find/gardener>

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