

kids' magical garden

When a BBY reader and mum wrote in asking Don for his ideas on a magical kids' garden he created a special design just for them.

Dear Don,

I really need some help. I am such a lucky mum. I have been blessed with one-year-old twin boys, Max and William, and a lovely little girl called Molly, three years, and a wonderful old dog called Misty. So what is the problem? In a nutshell, getting out of the house is the problem. Getting everyone fed, dressed and ready, packing enough food, drink, spare clothes and then getting everyone safely strapped into the car or pram whilst leaving enough time to get somewhere and back again before nap time. My children need to get outside, they love being outside playing and most of all it is so good for them. We are lucky to have a back garden but most of it is taken up by a pool. That leaves a strip of lawn about 13m x 3m which I use as our 'escape' on the days we don't make it out of the house. But it is not a nice play area. It is literally some scratchy turf with a few plastic toys plonked on top. The main issue is that it gets really hot between 10am and 5pm and it is bordered by a Colorbond fence which just radiates heat. I have planted a few crepe myrtle trees but they are in the wrong place and very slow-growing. And we have a little

plastic cubby house which the boys love but I am nervous about it as it gets so hot and it does get lots of spiders there. So what is the solution? I love gardening and have been desperate to try and improve the lawn area for my children, but with three little ones under four, no gardening tools and limited knowledge my attempts have been damp squibs. So this year I decided that getting my children outdoors and exploring nature was so important that we would use some savings and borrow a bit to try and turn this lawn area into something MAGICAL, just for kids! A child's wonderland, something special that no one has done before. And my ideas have grown and grown, thinking along the lines of a miniature fairy forest, some kind of pebble stream, maybe a 'beach area' (sand pit), maybe some grass 'mounds' or 'hills' for climbing, covering the fence with trellis and getting some fast-growing climbers, getting as many plants and vegies into this small space as is practical. In a nutshell I want to use every spare inch of this little plot and turn this patch into a kids' paradise with places to explore, to hide, to climb, to feel, to simply delight all their senses. **Barbra Cooper, Adelaide, SA**

Hi Barbra,

Loved your letter, fantastic, and so here is my plan for a Magical Kids' Garden.

As you can see, it has the fairy hut at the far end. This could be a modified garden shed, ideally a wooden structure so that the kids don't cook on a hot day.

It features a mandarin tree, three raised vegie gardens, a sandy beach, some perfumed plants (lavender, gardenia and heliotrope) and a beautiful weeping mulberry to hide inside of.

There is also a picnic table and chairs, a grassy mound, a daisy field and a flowering gumtree over the top for shade.

I've left lots of areas open so that the kids can add their own creative ideas. Good luck,

Don



Story and garden design by Don Burke, photos by Getty Images; garden plan illustration by Kim Gregory

