

How to make the most of your small family garden

Even the smallest family garden can be a great place for kids to play and adults to unwind. So, with a little imagination and some practical pointers, you should be able to make the most of your outdoor area.

In this eBook, we offer advice on how to design your garden

and what to plant in it. We also recommend some garden projects that your kids will love to get involved in.

Have your own suggestions or insights you'd like to share? Join the conversation using the hashtag **#FamilyFriendlyGarden**



Top design tips

The following simple design tips should help you to create a garden that's attractive, easy to maintain and fun for your little ones.



To stop outdoor toys crowding your garden, consider investing in a lock-up garden chest.



Include a dedicated play area

No family garden is complete without a dedicated play area for sports, games or crafts. Ideally, this should feature a child-friendly surface such as grass or bark chippings for soft landings.

Position your seating in a corner

To prevent your garden from feeling crowded, position your seating in a corner. You could use decking or paving here to set the space apart. Creating different areas like this will add visual interest.

Add plenty of pots

For a low-maintenance alternative to flowerbeds, place a variety of potted plants on gravel or paving. This will give you plenty of greenery and colour without requiring lots of work.



Attaching a decorative mirror to a wall or fence is another way to make your garden appear larger - although this is best avoided in areas where ball games will be played!



Stilted or wall frame hedging can be good options too, especially if you're after added privacy.

Introduce climbing plants

When ground space is limited, climbing plants offer an easy way to introduce more greenery to your outdoor area. From sweet-smelling honeysuckle to colourful wisteria, there are lots of climbers that can perk up garden fences or walls.

Create a living wall

A living wall is another space-saving way to add lushness to your garden. These vertical planting systems can include a range of shrubs, grasses, herbs, perennials and more.

Paint your walls white

Painting any walls in your garden white can create the illusion of extra space and light. It also provides an attractive contrast with your plants.

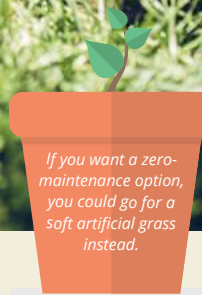
Choosing the right plants

The plants you select could make or break your garden, so it's important to choose wisely. Here are some suggestions to get you started.



Avoid poisonous or irritant plants

Especially if you have small kids, safety is likely to be a key concern. With this in mind, you may want to avoid potentially harmful plants. You can find a list of these plants on the Royal Horticultural Society website.



If you want a zero-maintenance option, you could go for a soft artificial grass instead.

Go for hard-wearing turf

Fine turf can struggle to cope with heavy footfall and it requires a lot of attention in terms of feeding, mowing and aerating. It's better to go for harder wearing turf that is described as 'multi-purpose', 'amenity' or 'low-maintenance'. Some versions include micro clovers that mean they don't need watering and feeding as often.



Select tough shrubs

For family gardens, tough shrubs are always a shrewd choice. They can withstand the occasional stray football or frisbee and are easy to look after. Stachys, or lambs ears, are a good example. They have attractive flowers and soft, velvety leaves that kids love to stroke.



Use instant hedging troughs

Instant hedging troughs are a convenient choice for family gardens. Specially designed to stay in the pot, they can be used as perimeter hedges and to separate different parts of your garden. They only need clipping once or twice a year, and they give you the results you want immediately.



Garden projects your kids will love

Even in a small garden, there are plenty of projects that you can get stuck into with your kids. Here are just a few ideas that should help to get your youngsters outside and enjoying the fresh air.



If you fancy some DIY, you could make a raised bed from sleepers. This should be about the right height for your kids and it will help to avoid the risk of plants being trampled accidentally.



Give them their own plot

Kids usually love growing their own plants, and as well as being fun and rewarding, this activity can teach them a lot about science and nature. To get them started, allocate a plot to your kids. If possible, make sure it's in a decent spot that gets plenty of sunlight.

There are a whole range of colourful flowers or tasty vegetables that your kids could grow from plug plants, seeds or bulbs. Herbs like rosemary and thyme can also be a good choice.

Create a fairy garden

From a hollow in the ground to the base of a tree, you should be able to find the ideal spot in your outdoor area to create an enchanted garden. These features can really fire children's imaginations.

You could help your kids to accessories the garden with extras like ribbons or even tiny fairy doors. Solar lights also make a great addition.

Make a bug box

If your kids are endlessly fascinated by creepy crawlies, you could create a bug box for your garden. All you need is an open-fronted container. Get your children to search the garden for materials to fill it with, from twigs and pine cones to dried grass.

If you don't have the materials to fill up your bug box in your garden, you could take your kids on a woodland walk to get stocked up.



We hope this guide has given you plenty of ideas to help you make the most of your outdoor area, no matter how small it is.

Sources:

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