

Beat the credit

How to create a child-friendly garden

A successful garden has to cater for all the needs of family life: be a play area, a place to relax, to hang your wash and to grow a few pretty flowers and some fresh veggies.

PLANNING IS KEY

Have a good look round. Assuming that your boundaries don't need attention (rickety fences are a hazard and so are hedges with holes in them), start noting down what you already have.

If your flower borders have plants, try to keep as many as you can; moving them around can help and you

can always fill holes with cuttings, or split big plants.

If all you've got is a big expanse of grass, then you have a

area for the shed and/or greenhouse.

You can even use software - many free programs are available on the



This grassy plot offers plenty of scope for a child-friendly garden

perfect blank canvas on which you can unleash your flair and imagination.

Draw your garden's shape on a piece of paper, marking the area for the patio, the play area, the washing line, the borders, the

internet, including the BBC one at www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/design/virtualgarden_index.shtml.

Poisonous plants

Foxglove, daffodil/hyacinth bulbs, azaleas (if eaten), mushrooms, broom, delphinium, drooping laurel, jasmine (berries), laburnum, lupins, oleander, wisteria (seeds/pods), black nightshade, monk's hood, privet, yew, iris.



crunch:

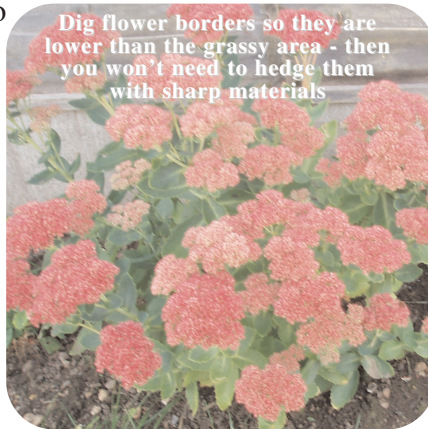
garden on a budget

without breaking the bank...

DANGERS IN THE GARDEN

My previous garden was landscaped to an inch of its life with hard materials so it was difficult to relax when my toddler ran around. There was paving, cement, a pond, flower beds edged by sharp roofing tiles, pebbles, steps made of railway sleepers... If your plot has hard landscape materials and you can't afford to remove them, you can cover hard areas with woodchips or mats made from recycled rubber. These mats provide safety surfacing - handy for play areas. They also don't get kicked around like bark or chippings.

Thorny bushes and poisonous plants are serious hazards (see *Poisonous plants*). Some plants have



sharp stems that can inflict cuts (such as pampas grass), while holly and roses give nasty pricks to prying small hands. If you have any of these, please trim them so they don't overhang in the grassy area or move them away from the play area.

Check the condition of your paving - replace damaged slabs or fix loose ones. Pebbles are a choking hazard to small children, while water features should be fenced or covered.

All tools and chemicals should be locked inside a shed at all times.

PLAY AREA

Depending on your budget, you can have a climbing frame, a playhouse, a swing, a sandpit... Be careful where you place climbing frames ▶

Nice & easy
Vigorous veggies: spinach; peas; salad; beans; potatoes; Swiss chard; cherry tomatoes; cucumbers.
Pleasant perennials: allium; muscari; sedum; fuchsia.
Fragrant flowers: honeysuckle lavender; buddleia.
Heavenly herbs: salvia; chives; rosemary; sage; mint; thyme.
Pretty plants: hosta; stipa; ferns; clematis; kniphobia; geranium.

or playhouses. They should be away from concreted areas and not too near walls, fences or very large bushes. Do buy a sandpit, with a cover - you don't want it to become the local cats' toilet.

And if you want to keep them occupied for ages, why not give your kids their own plot to sow their seeds in?

CHEAP STOCK

Ask friends and neighbours to donate cuttings or swap yours with theirs.



Search gardening shops for discounted

seeds and plants - there are often sales during bank holiday weekends.

I got many plants from charity sales or swapped cuttings with friends. If there is an allotment near you, find out if they have plant sales.

STOP PRESS!

Calling all money-savvy mums! Do you have any tips you'd like to share with us? Email nctrugbynewsletter@live.co.uk including pics of you and your little ones...

Lean & green

<http://uktv.co.uk/gardens/item/aid/503630>

www.selfsufficientish.com/budgetorganicgardening.htm

www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/main.jhtml?xml=/gardening/2008/05/02/garden-design102.xml