



Nature Play
SA
TURN PLAY INSIDE, OUT.

NATURAL PLAYSPACES FAMILIES

CREATING YOUR OWN BACKYARD NATURAL PLAYSPACE

When you're considering what to do in your own yard, here's a list of elements that will guarantee your children have opportunity to as much free and unstructured play as they can handle:

Secret places

Whether it's a cubby they can erect, a bush they can climb in or a rock to hide under, children need places where they feel hidden to play freely by themselves or with their friends

Water

Children love to play with water so include a water feature, water pump or homemade sprinkler. Combine it with a sand pit and you will provide hours of fun and creative play

Mud

Children need to get dirty and mud provides the ultimate fun and sensory experience. If you're not quite ready for the full body mud assault, start with a few old pots, pans, bowls, wooden spoons or kitchen implements and some dirt and water. If you don't have an area in your yard for a mud pit, you can keep it mobile and contained by using an old wheelbarrow.

Something to climb

Children have a natural instinct to climb that begins when they first learn to crawl. Plant or retain trees that will become good for climbing or consider a climbing structure made out of rocks, tree stumps of different heights, or even a rock wall in the backyard.



Gardens to grow

Children love to dig and gardens provide the ideal opportunity to teach them about caring for things and to understand where their food comes from. You don't need a lot of space to plant some herbs or flowers, but if space is a premium, start with a pot and a seed. You might want to check out the 'Gardening with Children' instruction sheet to give you some inspiration and ideas of things to plant.

A place to create

Whether it's a paint station, a play kitchen or a concert arena, providing a performing area outdoors inspires creativity, fantasy and imagination.

Something to swing on

The best swings are those home-made, a long tyre swing or a rope slung over a tree branch. Children can wile away hours as they experience the freedom and exhilaration of seeing how high and how fast they can go.

Open ended materials and loose parts

This is unstructured play at its finest. Timber pieces of all different sizes, log round cookies, pinecones, rocks, sticks, seed pods, all provide limitless possibilities for children to build creations of their own, learn problem solving and collaborate with their friends. Most of it is inexpensive, can be sourced yourself or can be recycled from something else. Loose parts play can be messy, so if that's a consideration for you, find a corner in the yard where the 'mess' will be less apparent.

If you want to create a backyard that gives children an opportunity to play, learn and explore, Nature Play SA have developed a list of [design principles to help](#)

