



IT'S TIME TO PLAY

Katrina Kieffer-Wells, MSGD from the award-winning Earth Designs, based in Leigh-on-Sea, talks child-friendly gardens that deliver style and fun...

Our Chelmsford-based clients were building a new kitchen-diner with bi-folding doors into the garden. They wanted a lawn with safe spaces for their children to play, but without the messy view of play equipment. It needed to work visually and practically. Be child-friendly, but a stylish, grown-up space too, with areas for entertaining.

EMBRACING STILLNESS AND HUBBUB

After seeing the "Sounds of the City" exhibition in London I was inspired by the idea of busy cities being noisy backdrop to areas of quiet and stillness. With this in mind, the children's play area went to the back of the garden, along with a large lawn and climbing equipment. A wide patio was installed across the bifold doors, along with intimate lighting and seating for grown-up gatherings.

CAN GARDENS BE CHILD-FRIENDLY AND STYLISH?

A family garden needs to work for everyone, big and small. But no matter how beautiful the planting or design, brightly coloured plastic toys will steal the focus. So how do you meet everyone's needs? The solution came to me while admiring the decorative mashrabiya screens at Leighton House.

TIMBER SCREENS

By building screens to hide the play area children's games and sophisticated dinner parties could happily coexist. And instead of plastic toys, we added a water feature. Creating a serene focal point to the vista from the new back doors and an interactive play space to paddle, splash and pour.

GET THE LOOK

LOVE YOUR OUTSIDES

Your garden is an investment, just like your home. But all too often beautiful new kitchens look out onto shabby backyards. Try to reflect your inside style, outside, by using similar colours or flooring. And include this in your renovation budget from the start.

GROWING WITH YOUR FAMILY

Hide play areas behind a screen so your garden can change with your family's needs. Use climbing plants, hedging, tiles or timber to create natural or decorative screens that keep toys hidden until your children grow out of them.

Earth Designs are members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and Association of Professional Landscapers.



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