

# Creating a garden hideaway

Many perfectly sensible and sociable adults will confess that they had a secret, private hiding place in some garden of their childhood: a hidden corner in a grandmother's garden, a secret spot in a grove of trees, or even a shrubby nook in a vacant lot. In the rush to ensure that we create environments for socializing and for family activities, we can forget the joy we found in those secret garden hideaways. Sure, it's great to have "together" spaces: like a pool for the family to splash in... or a swingset and sandbox for the youngsters. But more than one parent with a beautifully groomed yard has listened to their child speak reverently of the "hideout" at a friend's place: a bank of towering, unkempt weeds where a child can hide from the world. Children have it figured out: the more hectic our lives, the more we need a place for renewal and rejuvenation. Creating your own garden hideaway need not involve major construction projects or expensive plantings. Instead, scan your garden for the three key criteria:

## HIDDEN FROM THE WORLD

Look for privacy, or a sense of enclosure or hidden-ness. You'll need space for a comfortable chair for one. Is there a spot where you can grow a screen of morning glories... or maybe moonflowers if you plan to enjoy your oasis in the evening? The perfect kids' hideout allows you to remain hidden while preserving at least a glimpse of the outside world. Use the same principles.

## THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

You're a very lucky homeowner if birdsong and rustling leaves are your natural sound environment. For the rest of us, we need to improvise. Wind chimes are a popular way to create a more peaceful soundscape. But to many, the sound of water is in comparably soothing, and you can achieve the effect with only a babbling fountain in a large ceramic pot. Even a gurgle can help conceal or counteract the noise of traffic or humming air conditioners.

## EYE-LEVEL BEAUTY

Create a focal point that you can enjoy from your chair. Flowering vines – like the morning glory or moonflowers – can be helpful. Or put a pot of pretty annuals on a short pillar or stand. Consider some scented flowers to appeal to the senses. Only a fence to keep you company? Try mounting a framed mirror that reflects a pretty area of the garden. From daycare to office work, our lives are overwhelmingly communal – and solitude is a quality which easily goes missing in our lives. Each day, try to disappear for a few minutes – with an early morning coffee, a mid-afternoon lemonade or a late-night glass of wine. Bring a favourite book, a summer journal, or happy thoughts... but leave your roam phone in the house.

*"we need a place for renewal and rejuvenation"*



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## KID'S CORNER

Don't forget that children still love their own little secret spaces. It's not too late to grow a Green Bean Hideout: in a corner of the garden (out of the way but not too shaded) outline a circle about 5' in diameter. Build a temporary teepee frame with 8 or more long bamboo poles, nestled firmly into the ground around the circle, and simply secured at the top with twine. At the base of each pole, plant one or two seeds of scarlet runner or other pole beans. Kids will love watching their secret hideout grow to the rafters and beyond. And this hideout has a built-in kitchen! Make a memorable summer! Cheers!