

Your Home

Do-it-yourself tips

Published: 25 October 2017

Written by Carolyn Snyder - Special to the Town Crier

Following are tips from Barbara Butler on how to create fun and magical backyards to encourage kids to go outside and play.

- Use full round log cut-offs to create a circle in your backyard. It doesn't have to be high off the ground to create a fun space of "inside the circle" and "outside the circle" and "walk the circle."
- Of course, a playhouse or tree house is a great way to get the kids outside, but it can be as simple as a corner of the yard, a garden shed, a platform in a small tree or a tent. Let the kids decorate it, and then offer to bring them snacks in their new clubhouse as soon as they get home from school.
- String a rope between two trees – very low to the ground – and try to learn tightrope walking. It helps to have a balancing stick.
- Make an old-fashioned tree swing with a 1.5-inch diameter manila rope. It's great to look at and play with. Tie it loosely but securely around a strong tree branch and tie a knot at the bottom to sit on.
- Engage the kids in creating an obstacle course. If you provide the idea and a stopwatch, they won't be able to resist. Obstacle courses can include running, climbing, jumping, crawling and balancing elements with the aim of testing endurance while being timed. Sometimes a course involves mental tests, too.
- String a hammock between two trees for lots of lollygagging.
- Helping to design the backyard will give the kids a sense of pride and ownership. Make your own stepping stones. Many craft stores sell kits with the molds and the cement. You provide the decorations: marbles, shells, beads, pebbles. Or, decorate flower boxes and plant with veggies or flowers.