

Build a Fairy House

Overview: Kids like to play in their garden. Building a Fairy House (small structures for fairies and other imaginary kin to live) in the garden is a great, inexpensive way to encourage them to use their imaginations. When your children are fully engaged in pretend play in the garden they are stimulated in many ways—creating, observing, collecting, exercising, and communicating—all while enjoying and gaining an appreciation for the natural world and quiet spaces. The garden, with its wide variety of objects in different shapes, sizes, colors and textures is the perfect place to enhance and energize vital imagination—all you'll really need to make this project magical is a little fairy dust.

Materials:

- A variety of natural materials including rocks, sticks, bark, leaves, pine cones, nuts, and flowers

Approximate Time to Complete: 5 to 45 minutes depending on the age and attention span of the child

Location: Outdoors

Ages: 2 to 10

Season: All seasons

Instructions:

1. Encourage your child to find a special location for their Fairy House. Try to find a shady spot where your child can sit down on the ground. Many of these houses are built at the base of a tree or in wooded areas, but any location that is safe and comfortable to play will work.
2. Next, help your child collect an assortment of natural materials (fairies don't like artificial items). Guide their selection so that it is exciting for them, but help them avoid damaging any plants. For example, encourage them not to pick all the flowers or fruit off of one plant, but rather one flower or fruit from multiple plants. Make sure they know if there is anything that they need to avoid such as thorny or poisonous plants. Especially with young children that explore by placing things in their mouths, adult oversight is needed to ensure safety.
3. Start building. If your child is new to discovery, you might need to help them get started with some basic ideas for walls, a roof, and a small bed. Try not to overdo it with advice, children will soon engage and make discoveries of their own.
4. Play! Enjoy! Tear down and build it again! Share!
5. Take a picture or video to keep a memento of their creation. Not only will this be something that is fun to look at later, but it also gives them a boost of self-confidence by acknowledging they created something worthy of being recorded and a chance to share their creation with others.