

## **Growing Young Imaginations through Fairy Gardens**

By Melissa Pilgrim

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Want to get your little ones interested in gardening at an early age while also helping to develop their imaginations? Then help them create their very own fairy garden!

Creating a fun, colorful, magical garden meant to attract fairies, trolls, or whatever other mystical creatures your kids want to include will not only help them develop a love of nature, it will also help them develop their creativity in three distinctive ways. First, it will allow them to use their imaginations to decide what kind of fairy garden he or she wants to create. Second, it will have them become a designer as he or she picks out the kinds of plants, flowers, and materials to put in their garden. And third, it will make them into a true gardener as he or she creates their actual garden for real.

Follow these simple 7 steps to help your child create their very own fairy garden:

1. Using paper and crayons, first let your child draw out their ideas for their fairy garden.
  - Let them think about all the colors they want in it and what kind of plants and structures (such as houses, beds, caves, or statues).
  - Some children might like their garden to look bright and colorful, attracting fairies and butterflies, some might like them to be only the color green and attract trolls or dragons, and some might like them to be something unique to attract all kinds of creatures. Be careful to let them decide who and what can live in their garden, for at this point their imagination is in full swing and you want them to keep using it to create their own world, characters, and even stories just as they want it!
2. Using old magazines then have your child look for things through the pictures that match what they envisioned when drawing out their gardens. Let them cut out and paste a new picture/collage of their garden for easy reference when going out later to gather the materials.
  - It's okay if they make changes at this stage too from what they first drew based on what they see in the pictures—let them know when creating and designing changes often happen as part of the whole creative process.
3. Using the drawing and the collage, next decide how you and your little ones are going to create this wonderful fairy garden and where.
  - Are you going to create it inside or outside?
  - Are you going to create it using real plants or make it all out of construction paper? For either, what do you have available to you as materials to create it with?
  - Help your child use their creativity even more by asking them what they are going to make certain houses or structures out of... for instance, if they want a little wooden house

and want to make it look like a real house, would using pieces of tree bark glued together work for that? Or would Popsicle sticks work better?

- If the garden is meant for outside get them to think about what kinds of materials will be best for “outside” weather based on where you live.
- If the garden is meant for inside get them to think about what kinds of materials will be best for keeping it indoors (especially if making a garden with real plants).
- Talk all this through so your little one knows just what to expect it to look like once it’s finished.
- Also be sure to talk about the kind of care the garden will need once it’s created, and, if it is going to be made of real plants, make sure your child understands that continuing to care for the garden is part of having it and that they are ready to commit to caring for it.

4. Once this is all decided, go out and gather all the materials needed to create the fairy garden.

5. Have fun as you create it! Allow your child to keep using their imagination and make changes whenever necessary or when inspiration hits during the creation process. Sometimes seeing it put together will spark even more ideas he or she couldn’t conceive of when it was only on paper.

6. Enjoy it, even adding to it later on! Allow your child the chance to both care for and add to his or her fairy garden over time. He or she may add actual dolls or action figures to it, toy cars for the fairies or trolls to get around in, or washcloths for bedding at night. Whatever they feel their creatures need is fine, for this means their imaginations are active as they envision their garden actually being used by the fairies or creatures they created it for.

7. Encourage your child to tell you stories about what’s happening in their garden from time to time. Doing this will encourage your child to keep caring for their garden and not forget about it over time. It will also allow their creativity to shine as they learn how to make up their own stories. You can also have your child sing to or create a song about his or her fairy garden, further encouraging their creativity with music!

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Melissa Pilgrim is a freelance writer and the author of *Animal Motions*, an interactive children’s picture book and app which she created to help children use their imaginations and stay active in a fun way. She’s had 16 plays produced, 4 screenplays optioned, and 1 TV series optioned. She was the artistic director of The Sheil Park Theatre in Chicago for 5 years where she produced 22 shows for children, teens, and adults. To learn more, visit her websites [www.YourWritingMuse.com](http://www.YourWritingMuse.com) and [www.AnimalMotions.com](http://www.AnimalMotions.com).