

# Making space

Learning through Landscapes explains how a fresh look at even the smallest outdoor areas can lead to big adventures...

**W**hen planning changes to your outdoor space it is important to remember that, as well as opportunities for active play, the outdoors provides great learning opportunities too. And no matter how small or uninspiring, with some creative thinking, it can still be a space where children can thrive...

## 1 Space savers

You may look at your outdoor space and feel that providing good quality opportunities for young children isn't possible. Try instead to see problems as challenges to be overcome. Small spaces often give you the opportunity to be creative with your provision and to think outside of the box.

## 2 Walls and fences

If you are lucky enough to have sturdy walls or fencing surrounding your outdoor space, consider adding a range of hooks at different heights to hang resources from. Think about hanging chalkboards, weaving panels and mirrors within the space. Hooks and pulleys are also useful to hang up items such as baskets for throwing into, buckets for moving things, or decorative backdrops for role-play.

## 3 Up and above

One of the advantages of being outdoors is the sense of space it provides not just around us but above us too. Add features such as washing lines from which to hang and display the children's creative work. Why not provide resources to create mobiles to hang and flutter in the breeze?



## 4 On the ground

A great use of space in a small outdoor area is to install more permanent features, for example, planting and seating, around the perimeter, leaving the middle of the space free for activity. If space is limited then plan a series of activities over the year so that you can theme really well, rather than attempting to offer a variety of limited experiences all year.

## 5 Make it special

Whatever the size of your outdoor space it is important to capture the special nature of the outdoors. Ensuring that your space offers children natural resources such as plants, water and sand, and the opportunities to make noise, get messy and experience risk taking, will go a long way to providing good quality alternative experiences to your indoor environment.

## 6 Nooks and crannies

Dens and natural nooks and crannies provide a place to be with friends, or to be alone and build a sense of independence. Providing den-building resources will support children in creating their own nooks and crannies if your space does not naturally offer them.

### TIP

**Providing vital shade and shelter need not be costly. Consider sinking sturdy posts into large plant pots filled with cement – hooks can be added allowing you to hang tarpaulins or fabrics to provide shade where needed.**

## find out more

Learning through Landscapes offers a range of services to support outdoor learning and play in the early years. Its membership resources and publications provide a regular supply of fresh activity ideas, and it offers on-site support through advisory visits and half-day, full-day or twilight training sessions for nurseries. Visit [ltl.org.uk](http://ltl.org.uk)

## 7 Water

Consider installing guttering along the perimeter at child height and adding resources to facilitate children's investigation. Paddling pools and tuff spots come into their own in a small space where storage is tight, particularly if moving water troughs is an issue.

## 8 Natural elements

If your small space lacks grass, get hold of some large tyres and get children to plant them up with grass seed. If there is no room for a traditional sand pit, why not be creative and consider using planters or large plant pots?

## 9 Growing and planting

Nurturing seeds into plants will provide numerous learning opportunities for young children and again is an important part of outdoor learning. If space is tight and raised beds are not possible, think about using the space on your sunniest wall or fence. Be creative – consider using wellies or drinks bottles as planters and hanging them up.