

## Picking the perfect plants

Here's a list to get you started. There are plenty of other plants just as appropriate, so let your creativity and inspiration be your guide. Remember, your garden exists to fulfill your needs, so experiment if it will make you happy. If it doesn't work, try something different next time. No big deal.

### wee, tiny plants

anemones (short varieties), lily of the valley, dwarf iris, violets, dianthus, creeping phlox, English bluebells, baby's tears

### airy, wispy plants

corydalis, epimedium, heuchera, thyme, black laced elderberry, grasses, ferns, particularly a dwarf fern *Bommeria hispida* 'Gila dwarf'

### unusual forms

cyclamens, sedums and succulents, helleborus, pulmonaria, sarracenia, Chinese lanterns

### foundation plants

small varieties of hostas, trillium, Irish moss, snap dragons, primrose, geranium, particularly *Geranium cinereum* 'Ballerina'

### edible plants

strawberries, chives, purple sage, golden marjoram, cherry tomatoes, cut-and-come-again-lettuce mixes; snip these to keep them small; eat your trimmings

### indoor plants

baby's tears, dwarf mondo grass, polkadot plant, rosemary, miniature ivy, jade 'Princess pine'

#### References

- University of Illinois Extension, Plant palette: fairy gardens, March 21, 2010
- "Fairy house handbook", Liza Gardner Walsh, Down East, 2012

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# Fairy garden magic



# Add a fairy garden to your life to recapture your inner child

The best part of a garden is a place that makes you stop to smile. If your plantings are uninspiring, why not tuck a fairy garden in for a bit of whimsy. Add a corner of delicate foliage, miniature flowers, a rustic stump house, tiny bells and twinkling lights, and suddenly your garden is alive with magic. Yard work is too often a dreaded chore, so how refreshing would it be to create a playful, unexpected haven of wonder.

Contrary to popular belief, fairies aren't all generous like Tinkerbell and the fairy godmothers. They have a dark side, playing tricks on those who displease them. Legend has it that if you make a place that pleases fairies, they won't harm people in the vicinity, and may even do good deeds for you. So why tempt fate? Get creating.

Fairies are wee beings, so proportion is very important in creating a comfortable fairy home. Tiny structures, miniature foliage and flowers contrasted with large, protecting leaves create a safe landscape. Tuck dwarf iris and dianthus under an elephant leaf hosta and you have a protected hideaway. Now add a tiny rock house and a twig swing, and fairies are sure to make it their home.

Delicate textures also attract fairies, encouraging them to flit in and out of the ticklish foliage. Grasses with fine seed heads, corydalis and heucheras all lend an airy, soft note to your garden. Varieties abound, so color options are plentiful.

As fairies are often hunted by cats and dogs, lush greenery to hide within is vital. Densely plant a hidden corner of your yard, then tuck a fairy house within the foliage to create a surprise oasis to enjoy as you do yard work.

## Guide to creating a fairy-friendly landscape

### Outdoor garden ideas



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Fairy gardens can be added around existing plants directly on the ground or they can be built in buckets, tubs, wheelbarrows, stumps, hollow gourds or any other durable container, then tucked into the landscape.

Fairy houses are an obvious focal point, but don't let your imagination stop there. Why not a tiny farm, playground, farmer's market stall or wee cultivated vegetable plot with a toy tractor.

Many companies sell fairy garden accessories, but most things can be built from cast-off items and bits from nature. A rectangular rock becomes a chair; twigs become a porch railing. Reimagine uses for sturdy leaves, long grasses, pinecones, shells, nuts, rocks, beach glass, moss, bark, popsicle sticks, bird nests, dried flower heads and seed pods. The options are endless.

Get children involved! They see magical possibilities all around. And who can't use more time exploring outdoors.

And don't forget the twinkling lights. If a power source is nearby, plug in Christmas lights. If not, use battery-powered light strands, flickering faux candles or solar lights.

Wind chimes and bells finish off the magic.

### Indoor garden ideas

Many of the same concepts as outdoor gardens apply inside, but these can also use less durable materials and often are more visible.

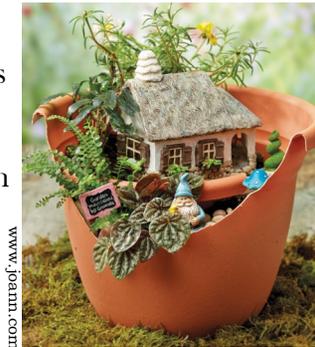
Baskets, flower pots, teacups, flat rocks, pie tins, platters, wooden boxes or an old soup pot are all handy bases. If live plants are going to be included, as they should, remember to incorporate proper drainage to maintain healthy plants. Or use xeric plants to reduce watering needs.

Since weathering isn't an issue, more delicate items can be incorporated into the garden. Matchboxes become cozy beds; cotton balls are chimney smoke. Lace, tissue paper, fabric, felt, modeling clay, paper mache and dried flowers can withstand the indoor environment, so your imagination is your only limit.

Unless you intentionally hide your garden,



viewing will be easier, so tiny details are worth the effort. Open a window in your fairy house to reveal a hidden world inside. Write a tiny note to slip in the mailbox. Micro plants can really be appreciated up close. And lights are fun indoors, as well.



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