

A kid-friendly yard is a plus when selling a home to families

By Jill Sell

Public playgrounds and parks offer opportunities for children to learn socialization skills and make friends. The destinations are great places for parents and kids to share an afternoon. But small children shouldn't go to a park alone. And most parents don't have the time or gasoline for the daily trips that are important for a child's physical exercise and interaction with the outdoors.

That's why a home with a kid-friendly

environment is a bonus for families. A backyard that is safe, easy to maintain, and that sparks young imaginations is highly desirable for today's home buyers with children. Sellers should identify kid-friendly features for their real estate agent who can share those with potential buyers.

Homeowners can enhance their backyards by designating areas for a sandbox, water play station, swing set, playhouse, tricycle track, or children's

garden. Consider whether youngsters can be seen by adults from a patio, deck or the kitchen window. Avoid areas that get direct sun unless large umbrellas or other shading methods are used. It's not necessary to purchase massive or expensive playground equipment, but if you do, be sure the slide and swings are high quality and installed properly in a safe area.

Provide protective surfacing for playsets. Royalton Supply Landscape Center in North Royalton sells rubber mulch in several colors made from recycled ground-up tires. A base of at least six inches provides a bouncy landing under playground equipment or tree houses. The company also sells organic landscape materials, including top soils and fertilizers, that create safer yards for kids, according to company representative Lindsey Whited.

Elizabeth Werner is a child lifestyle expert with iVillage.com and a consultant for the Step2 toy company in Streetsboro. Werner likes outdoor playhouses that encourage role playing and which are places kids can call their



own. Sand and water play are other classics that can't be beat, she believes.

Don't forget plants. Gardens to Gro is a ready-made vegetable garden that includes attractive raised redwood beds and fencing, an automatic irrigation system, and fortified soil. It ships ready to assemble and makes an instant kids' garden. For more information, visit www.gardentogro.com.

A less expensive option, of course, is to just dig your own kid-sized garden area.

Home sellers and home buyers often question the ownership of backyard structures. A general rule is that "permanent" structures stay. Portable items usually make the move. Homeowners should consider the dismantling and shipping costs of taking a large playset or playhouse. Arrangements for the sale of outdoor items can be made through real estate agents.

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Gardens to Gro is a ready-made garden that includes animal-proof fencing, raised beds, an irrigation system and even rich soil mix. The attractive addition to any yard comes in three models and sizes.