

Child-Proofing Your Yard¹

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Once your child first pulls himself or herself onto two feet, normal housekeeping rules fly out the window as every parent makes child-proofing a high priority. These precautions become even more elaborate as the child becomes more mobile and more creative. But experts at the University of Florida point out that a backyard poses just as many hazards—but hazards of a different sort than a home.

Toddlers or pre-toddlers are naturally curious, and a yard provides a wealth of opportunity for these miniature Marco Polos. Their natural agility makes them adept at climbing or getting into places you thought were secure. Small children can move very quickly!

Before you let your child wander about your yard—or anyone else's—take a moment to walk around and explore it from a child's eye view. You'll find there are some things you'll want to move or block access to. Are there any ladders to climb? Any porch furniture to crawl onto? Also, young children will put everything in their mouths, from plant leaves to the soft dust of a powdered insecticide.

Buckets are a special hazard to toddlers, especially if there is any liquid inside. Toddlers are poorly balanced at best; if they lean over to look inside, they frequently topple in. They can drown in less than an inch of liquid in a bucket.

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Even with eliminating all the yard hazards you can identify, you'll still need to watch as your toddler explores your yard.

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