

Australian Sweet Spot

by Rusty Keeler



So there I was, in the sweetest home-based child care setting I have ever seen: "Kathy's House Family Day Care," Brisbane, Australia. First floor and back yard of the owner's home residence — the delightful and modest Kathy Springate. Working on her yard over five years, she transformed her space into an incredibly complex, beautiful, creative, inviting space for the young children she serves. Really, a magical marvel. A million ideas. Maybe 2 million!



Rusty Keeler is an artist/designer/author/speaker who is constantly excited and moved by the beauty of play and children's environments. Loose parts, creative freedom, caring adults, a natural setting — that's what he's talking about! Check out his work and inspiration at www.earthplay.net.





Patios, outdoor kitchen sinks, plants galore, multiple levels, large sand pit, loose parts upon loose parts to play with, a proper swing, even an open grassy space in a really teeny yard! Tape-reinforced boxes as cardboard building blocks. A natural materials messy construction area filled with pebbles, stumps, sticks, scoopers, tubes, and more. Even an "Anarchy Corner" stocked with loose tires, bricks, spools, shovels, and a water source hookup.

This place really has it all!



Can you have it all, too? Can our children? Yes, of course!! It just takes dreaming big, starting small, and never stopping. Keep it going. Keep thinking about how to make your space more engaging, more surprising, more stocked with loose stuff. Little by little make your space how you want it. Then keep it going. Test out your ideas. See what works and what doesn't. Make your yard a grand experiment! Emerging curriculum ... emerging play space ... emerging children ... emerging you! Go for it!

