

HOME&GARDEN

A nifty family garden — sans lawn

Widened paths, bright flowers characterize child-friendly space

By Elisabeth Laurence
Special to *The Examiner*

Sometimes, the best gardens for kids don't need even a blade of grass.

The Rechsteiners' Noe Valley residence had a lawn, but it led to a retaining wall over a dangerous drop to the ground below. The family, with two small children, wanted a safer environment. They hired landscape architect Janet Moyer of Janet Moyer Landscaping to redesign a child-friendly garden that would also provide privacy and kid-level excitement.

Moyer and her team cut into a very large wall ("It was quite extensive — took two days of loud sawing," Moyer says) to remove soil and create a terrace on the rise of the garden.

Moyer retained the soil with decorative moss rocks arranged in semi-circular patterns, which softened the wall's harsh angles.

For the steps and patio flooring, Moyer used decomposed granite ("a good price performer") over a base of drainage rock. She then compressed the granite with a plate to harden the surface.

Instead of grass, Moyer widened the paths to accommodate play items and structures.

In the lower-level beds, Moyer



providing privacy.

In the central area, near the outdoor table and chairs, Moyer planted iceberg roses, campagnula and Siberian iris flowering in the middle.

On the right side, she opted for fruit trees: mission fig, Meyer lemon and azara. Throughout, Moyer used low-voltage lighting to highlight architectural trees like the azara. On the ground, she laid redwood mulch.

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"I like it because it clings together and stays on hillsides," Moyer says. "Most of San Francisco's gardens are on hills."

Moyer installed smart irrigation controllers that regulate water delivery every day based on moisture and weather conditions.

"I think the biggest accomplishment was that it is interesting for children without having a lawn," Moyer says. "They didn't miss



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Kid-friendly: Above, a variety of flowering plants, many at child-height, provides an exciting environment for little ones.

From the terrace: Left, the different levels in this Noe Valley garden designed by Janet Moyer are easy to traverse.

it at all."

John Rechsteiner says, "Janet and her team created a safe space for our children and a beautiful viewing garden."

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