

PLAY

# WHIMSICAL WOODLAND TREEHOUSE

BY SARAH YANT, FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL, TWISTLEAF | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRITTANY DAWN SHORT





AT TWISTLEAF, WE BELIEVE THERE'S NO BETTER WAY TO FOSTER A CHILD'S LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS THAN TO CRAFT A NATURAL PLAYSCAPE THAT ENCOURAGES HOURS OF IMAGINATIVE ADVENTURE. THAT'S THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE SPECIAL TWO-STORY TREEHOUSE THAT WE DESIGNED AND BUILT FOR AN AUSTIN FAMILY OF FOUR.

Our goals were to create a defined space for two lucky young children, and to maximize the amount of play possible within a small footprint in the homeowners' backyard. The overall design is unique and allows harmonious integration between the fanciful children's area and the more traditional ranch-style home.

We chose not to rely heavily on common playscape materials like plastic and steel, and through our natural material choices were able to capture the magical spirit of a fairytale. We built the frame of the structure from natural-faced Eastern red cedar logs, a regionally specific material we appreciate for its durability and tactile quality. Two live edge cedar walls provide privacy from neighboring properties.

The open frame of the upper platform allows for plenty of light during the day, while the ceiling of string lights allows for play into the early evening. We created a second playspace, defined by capiz shell curtains, beneath the platform. The shell curtains make for a musical entry experience and catch the sunlight beautifully.

We wanted each element to inspire curiosity, and our design is full of interactive features like child-sized furniture made from tree stumps, a hidden climbing wall, a large chalkboard and a slide with a swing bar. We also added decorative accents such as a colorful outdoor rug, shelves for the children's trinkets and a hanging basket to personalize and soften the rustic structure and bring it into relationship with the surrounding landscape.

For the other areas of the property, we created relaxing and serene outdoor spaces. Features including a net swing and a culinary garden of herbs and edibles encourage more outdoor play and family fun. Limestone boulder retaining walls and pathways add to the beauty of the site while improving site accessibility and drainage. Shade-loving native Texas plants like Turk's cap and sedge envelop the front lawn, attracting pollinators and beneficial wildlife to the property, while water-saving drip irrigation prepares the lawn for potential dry spells and reduces water usage.

With thoughtful and creative design, our landscape project transformed this property into a tranquil urban retreat that promotes creative play and fosters a lifelong relationship with the natural world. ♦

**TWISTLEAF LAND DESIGN**

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