

# Plants for play

Well arranged plants can become play houses, hideouts, castles, bases and home camps.



- Some places that are overgrown in the forest become places where children hide or play. Sometimes these places are cleared to prevent the litter and perceived nuisance that is caused by this harmless activity.
- Manage these areas sensitively to preserve what is positive. Regularly clear litter and check for signs of misuse (drug paraphernalia, etc.) and check for hazards, such as sharp branches or roots, broken glass etc.
- Create new areas of shrub planting within, or around, areas where children play that will lend themselves to play. For structural planting use willow, hazel, *Viburnum opulus*, *Viburnum lanata* and weeping tree species (ash, birch, willow).
- Plant species that are going to provide seasonal interest throughout the year. Choose Spring species that have brightly coloured leaves and colourful blossom (cherry, viburnum). Select species that will provide bright Autumn colour and a harvest of fruit, nuts or seeds (Sorbus, cherry, walnut, blackberry). Include plants that provide evergreen shelter and colour or interesting bark and branching for Winter (birch, *Cornus alba*, *Salix* spp.)
- Fragrant plants will also be interesting to children especially those who might have a sensory impairment. In more remote forest locations draw attention (through signs) to wild garlic, myrtle, stink horn, resin, pine, silver fir, western red cedar; and in more formal areas to other fragrances like lavender, camomile, rosemary and creeping thyme.



## Useful resources

- 'Plants for Play' by Robin Moore
- See 'Idea 19: Willow domes and structures' and 'Idea 32: Questions through signs'.