Build a Toad Abode

Toads have gotten a raw deal. They have the unfair reputation of being the "ugly" version of frogs, and old wives tales warn that touching a toad will cause warts. Despite the bad PR, toads are one of nature's hidden jewels. Having a toad hanging around your yard to catch bugs is very eco-friendly and gives children a fascinating creature to study. Creating a home for a toad is an easy and fun project.

What You Need:

- Small terra cotta pot – around 4"
- Acrylic paints
- Paint brush
- Newspapers
- Small spade

What You Do:

1. Spread some newspapers out on your child's workspace so she won't drip paint anywhere.
2. Have your child decorate her pot with nature designs, petroglyphs, or whatever she would like.
3. When the pot has dried, take it outside to a spot that is in the soil – a flower bed that doesn't get any pesticides would be great, otherwise a spot under a bush or tree.
4. Next, have your child take the spade, dig down in the soil a little ways and bury the pot halfway in the ground on its side. Think of it as making a miniature cave. Leave the soil turned up, don't pat it down.
5. Now you have a toad house in your yard! If you don't attract a toad with your first toad house, try moving it to a different location. Soon, you will have an ally in the fight against garden pests.

Did You Know?

- Toads live in drier environments than frogs and tend to burrow.
- They are nocturnal, so don't be surprised if you don't see much of your toad.
- They eat insects, grubs, slugs, worms and other invertebrates—up to 110 a day.

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