



BEST OF THE WEST

JESSICA KRAUS WITH SONS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) HAYES, LEON, ARLO, AND REX AND DOG JACK

FORTRESS OF COOL

BEST HIDEOUT

A backyard play space is the warm-weather antidote to a messy house. Just as the final school bell rang last summer, Southern California blogger Jessica Kraus (@houseinhabit) was working up a game plan to keep her four boys, ages 2 to 11, occupied for the season. “I figured an outdoor getaway would offer a distraction for them—and provide me with a little peace of mind,” she says. After combing through Pinterest for inspiration, Jessica turned to husband Mike, a foreman for the local pipefitter union, to bring her informal sketches to life. Mike crafted a modern fort using corrugated sheet metal for a roof and rot-resistant 4-by-4 white redwood fencing for walls, topped with a few coats of Thompson’s WaterSeal, all for about \$300. (The couple will sell DIY treehouse kits on Etsy, along with the tipis at right.) The boys’ reaction? “They love it,” says Jessica, who also encourages movie screenings (complete with popcorn) inside the retreat. Here, five accessories for a fun-filled backyard. —Chantal Lamers

HOT SEAT
Alseda banana-fiber stool, \$30; ikea.com.



BALANCING ACT
Modern teeter-totter, from \$290; thepaloma.co.



BULL'S-EYE
Bow and arrow, from \$23; twobrosbows.com.



UNDER COVER
Wood-and-canvas tipi by Mike and Jessica Kraus, from \$125; etsy.com/shop/inhabitepees.



HANG TIGHT
Disc swing, \$60; theoriginaltreeswing.com.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THOMAS J. STORY, JEFFERY CROSS (5)