

Nature Play Spaces

Natural Materials List



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Natural Materials

- Tree trunks & logs
- Rocks
- Sandstone blocks
- Sand
- Loose parts



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Tree Trunks & Logs



SMALL LOG (EASY)

- Buried in sand, which can double as softfall.
- The height of the buried log makes it perfect for younger age groups.
- Minimal chance of the log moving on a flat pad.
- Not suitable for sloped areas or near drainage channels as wet weather may compromise the log's stability.
- Bark can be left on for children to interact with, perfect for loose parts play and/or arts and craft activities.
- Small logs can also be fixed into the ground vertically to create points of interest, play mazes, arbours etc.

PROPPED LOG (MODERATE)

- Great for any age group but more advanced coordination required.
- Fixed in the ground with a galvanised stirrup and bolts; Can be used on sloped sites with suitable fixings.
- Surround with high grade sand or bark softfall.
- Try to use a tree from the site that would need to be removed anyway, consult an arborist/landscape architect if necessary to determine the best species/specific tree on site.
- Most suited to medium sized logs with at least two larger branches for increased play potential.



LARG FELLED TREE (HARD)

- Extra large existing or felled tree with extensive branches; most suitable to older age groups and the odd young daredevil.
- The weight of a tree this size would fix it in place, however it may benefit from being dug into the ground to avoid toes and fingers being pinched.
- Sections of large branches can be kept for supplementary play elements/loose parts such as steppers or seats (inset) or even propped and fixed.
- Will require soft fall.

KEEP ALL LARGE FELLED TREES ON SITE



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Rocks

ORNAMENTAL ROCKS

Large rocks can be used as sculptural displays and climbing elements.

Depending on the height of said rocks, softfall may be necessary.

Extra large rocks that are already on site won't require fixing and will sit under their own weight. Adding extra smaller rocks can create interesting crawl spaces and fill pinch points to avoid injury.

Rocks can, of course, double as tables and seats in most instances as well.

Aim to arrange rocks in a way that maximises seating space.

Refer to **SANDSTONE BLOCKS** for similar ideas.

MULTIPURPOSE ROCKS

Rocks used for retaining can also double as climbing elements if they're staggered and set at appropriate heights.

Turning drainage channels into rocky dry creek beds is not only a practical way to filter pollutants and oxygenate water; but it also provides a lot of loose rocks for children to play with.

Depending on the proximity to grass, consider the risk of mower blades catching loose rocks.

NOTE: The addition of an interactive element like a hand pump will keep your creek bed flowing and give the user a good workout.



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Sandstone

CLIMBING/STEPPING

The most obvious benefit of sandstone blocks is their even, rectangular shape that makes them ideal for stacking, creating stairs and steps and forming mounds that can then be used for scrambling up or sliding down.

Similar to rocks, sandstone blocks are often used for retaining where they can serve a practical function and a play function.

The arrangement of blocks can create easier or harder climbing challenges for children, depending on the blocks' size and cut grade. Lower grades will create hand and foot holds to encourage climbing.

SANDSTONE BLOCK GRADES

Sandstone blocks come in several grades of refinement:

DIAMOND GRADE - Most refined and most expensive. Precision diamond cut top and bottom, wheel sawn on the sides.

A GRADE - Five wheel sawn sides.

B GRADE (Roughest cut) - Two to four wheel sawn sides.

BOULDER - Rough, uncut boulders, great for loose stacking.

Generally, B grade and Boulders are ideal for Nature Play as they still allow for stacking and sitting; but don't look unnatural or out of place; and of course, are far cheaper.

Consult a landscape architect if you're unsure of the appropriate grade to use.



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Sand

Sand can be used in a variety of ways within a nature play setting.

Sand Pits: sand pits come in many shapes and sizes, including inground and raised. Some grades of sand can serve as softfall and a sandpit; this saves money and space.

Softfall: sand can be used as a cheap, interactive softfall. Play sand and softfall are usually washed and screened to the same certification; making sourcing easier.

ENSURE THAT SANDPITS:

- Are level or tiered to reduce sand run-off.
- Have a minimum of 400mm depth.
- Comply with AS/NZS 4422:1996 – Playground Surfacing – Specification requirements and test methods, when being used as soft-fall.
- Have appropriate subsoil drainage, connecting to a nearby storm-water system - consult a landscape architect if necessary.

CONSIDER:

- Shading sand play areas partially or totally; sand gets very hot and children generally occupy them for extended periods. This can be done with buildings, trees, or shade structures.

NOTE: If you're using trees for shade, ensure that they are evergreen and don't drop excessive loose material (seedpods, branches etc).

Consider adding elements in the sand such as 'fossils', rocks, logs and/or loose parts and materials to increase interest and potential play opportunities.



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Loose Parts

“Loose parts play involves using a wide selection of everyday objects and materials to create, build, invent, experiment and play with” - Nature Play QLD

LOOSE VEGETATION

Many trees and shrubs are notorious for dropping leaves, branches, seed pods and other bits and bobs. Generally, these are a nuisance, but Nature Play QLD encourages schools and parks to use these natural loose parts as play items for children to make cubbies, obstacle courses, swords, and anything else they can imagine!

Refer to Nature Play QLD's suggested plant species for further ideas of natural loose parts.

Consider consulting a landscape architect for species selection and placement.

OTHER ELEMENTS

Just about anything else can also be a Loose Part, from PVC pipes and ropes to tyres and kitchenware!

This is a perfect opportunity to involve your local community in sourcing any unwanted bric-a-brac items that they have lying around.

For more ideas on appropriate items, refer to Nature Play QLD's Loose Parts Wish List on the Nature Play QLD website.

REMEMBER TO AVOID ANY SHARP OR OBVIOUSLY DANGEROUS ITEMS.

It's recommended that an area is designated for loose parts play to contain the spread of items around the play space.

