



Special Feature

Progressive Design Playgrounds launches Outdoor Learning Environments

Natural playgrounds serve as outdoor classrooms

Progressive Design Playgrounds designer and manufacturer of environmentally sound commercial play structures announced today that it has added natural playgrounds to its product line. The new line of play products, Outdoor Learning Environments, extends the classroom into the outdoors where children can play with and among natural elements such as sand, water and living plants. Through natural learning, outdoor classrooms enhance and reinforce the lessons students learn in every subject from math to the arts.

Outdoor Learning Environments are natural playgrounds that allow children to explore their surroundings with sight, hearing, touch and smell. Outdoor Learning Environments come in many different configurations depending upon the school, the community, the climate and resources available. They range from vegetable gardens, to slides built into grass hills, to stages where pretend play capitalizes on natural surroundings to stimulate young minds.

More elaborate natural playgrounds include science labs, greenhouses, ponds, dirt trails, trike trails and mazes and reading amphitheaters. They often include local plants and boulders, contributing to the authenticity of the natural environment. These outdoor classrooms function as play areas on their own or as additions to traditional physically challenging stand alone play structures such as overhead ladders, ring mazes, and climbing walls. A list of our natural playground products can be found online at www.outdoorlearningenvironments.com. Outdoor Learning Environments meet or exceed U.S. and International safety requirements.

Numerous studies find that the natural world is essential to a child's physical and emotional well-being. The correlation between outdoor play and social, cognitive and behavior development is well documented with evidence supporting benefits such as improved recall of information, creative problem solving and increased creativity among children. A growing number of children's advocates and political leaders express concern that disconnection with nature adversely affects children, sparking a nationwide back-to-nature movement to reconnect children to the outdoors. Outdoor Learning Environments bridge traditional playgrounds and nature, creating a pioneering and fun way for children to fully reap the benefit of outdoor play.

Rebecca Candra, Director of La Jolla United Methodist Church Nursery School in San Diego, CA, commented their children's existing play habits led the community to add an Outdoor Learning Environment last month. "As childcare experts, we understand the value of nature-based play," she said. "What is really interesting is that children, when left alone, inherently gravitate to the natural elements like dirt, grass and water." Candra added, "The children are thrilled to have a play space that combines natural elements and monkey bars and they benefit from the combination physically, emotionally and academically."

While Outdoor Learning Environments are custom built, they all require one essential ingredient to be successful: imagination. Imagination is a gift inherent in the minds of young children and one that will be challenged and even questioned as they grow in this age of modern technology. Outdoor Learning Environments fosters and nurtures this precious gift by supplementing traditional learning with natural learning, creating a curriculum that goes far beyond what young children learn from a textbook.

OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



The Mogul Maze

How fun is dirt? Very! Just ask any kid or think back to the mud pies of your youth. For an imaginative child a simple mound of dirt covered in soft grass is more than a hill – it's an adventure! Several mounds built close to one another create pathways and opportunities to explore. If you build this, they will play.

The Interactive Trike Trail

Have you ever pressed your palm or written your name in wet concrete? Years later, it remains exactly the way it was the day you did it. And that is the simple thrill of it. With the Interactive Trike Trail, children can leave a lasting impression on

a concrete trail custom designed to fit any designated outdoor space. The Interactive Trike Trail allows children to freely and safely ride their trike or scooter in the great outdoors (even if it is in the middle of a city).

The Interactive Grass Hill Slide

This custom slide is built right into the earth so children can safely slide down a steep incline without the use of costly safety surfacing. Kids can play king of the hill; race balls down underground tube tunnels or go for a good old-fashioned roll down the hill. Suitable for toddlers and teenagers alike, this slide is custom designed to fit the environment and the educational or community facility. The Interactive Grass Hill Slide features:

- * Upright support posts of recycled plastic lumber.
- * A play deck made from recycled plastic lumber.
- * Built-in underground tube tunnels for balls.
- * Slide entrances.
- * Two slides.
- * Three choices of shade roofs.
- * The option to add additional slides and a water misting system.
- * Complete instructions.

The Dramatic Play Stage

Playing "pretend" is big fun for kids and an important exercise in imaginative play. Ladies and Gentlemen introducing the Dramatic Play Stage! Let the curtain go up. The play stage includes art painting panels for the backdrop, a ticket booth/puppet panel, large soft deck stage and tall curtain supports.

The Sand Play Area With Interactive Sand House

Sand play is one of the most important elements of any play area. A truly interactive sand area contains deep clean white play sand, a water source, shade and a variety of digging tools. The interactive sand house provides the shade, water and interactive sand play walls.

Ask about other our other Outdoor Learning Environments like The Art Gathering Center, Outdoor Art Easels, The Recycled Plastic Tree Gathering Area.

PROGRESSIVE DESIGN PLAYGROUNDS WILL ALSO WORK WITH YOU TO DESIGN A COMPLETELY CUSTOM OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

From:
Progressive Design Playgrounds
 Progressive Design Playgrounds designs and manufactures state-of-the-art environmentally friendly commercial children's play structures, natural playgrounds, safety surfacing and recreation site furnishings. Progressive Design Playgrounds play structures are available worldwide through an extensive dealer network.

800.585.3131
www.pdplay.com



The Interactive Water Play System

Change the flow, build a dam, create a whirlpool or just splash and play. The Interactive Water Play System is designed to do all of that and more. Add a play creek to your learning environment for more lessons about cause and effect. Build and race sponge boats. Plant a water bog garden at the creek's end. The large recycled plastic water troughs can entertain up to eight kids providing endless water fun and imaginative learning with earth's most precious resource. The Interactive Water Play System features:

- * Three recycled plastic water play troughs.
- * Hose or solid water connections.
- * Recycled plastic water flow disrupters.
- * All installation hardware.
- * Complete step-by-step instructions for creating a safe and interactive play creek.



The Botanical Misting Arbor

Even in this day of Game Boy and Wii, the simple lessons learned in a garden remain awe-inspiring. The Botanical Misting Harbor is an amazing teaching tool for child development centers and community centers because it extends the classroom into the outdoors intertwining lessons and play. The Botanical Misting Harbor allows children to plant, nurture and cultivate flowers, fruit and vegetables. Seven separate growing boxes (for multiple classrooms) gave a root view teaching system so children can watch plants grow from below and above the surface. A soft shade roof allows just enough light for plants, while still providing a shady spot to cool down on warm days. The Botanical Misting Arbor features:

- * An arbor made from recycled plastic lumber.
- * A colored acrylic glass roof system.
- * Seven root view growing boxes of recycled plastic lumber.
- * Water misting system with hose or solid connectors.
- * Water misting system self-timer.
- * Complete instructions.

The Reading Amphitheater

This shaded amphitheater provides a great refuge for preschool story time or discussion groups for college-aged students. The Reading Amphitheater features:

- * Recycled plastic seating.
- * Recycled plastic arbor/shared sail support posts.
- * Arbor/shade sail roof.
- * All installation hardware.
- * Complete instructions.

The Tree Surround Gathering Area

Relaxation may be the opposite of active play but the benefits are equally substantial. This octagon seating area can be custom built around an existing tree or a newly planted one to create an outdoor reading area, social gathering area or a shaded and peaceful space to pass the time on a sunny day. Equally suited for adults and young children, this seating area can be custom-sized for universities, schools, day care centers, outdoor waiting rooms and more.