



TOYOTA | EVERGREEN

LEARNING GROUNDS

Imagine your city with nature

LOOSE PARTS PLAY



The theory of “loose parts” was first proposed in the 1970’s by architect Simon Nicholson. He believed that “loose parts” empower creativity and imagination by allowing children to develop their own ideas and explore their world.

Loose Parts can be used many ways and on many different levels (e.g., moved, carried, combined, lined up, sorted, collected, put together and taken apart). The materials can be natural or synthetic. When loose parts are available in a play space, children can use and adapt the materials as they please. They need to be stored, accessible, replenished changed and added to.¹

Here are some ideas for loose parts play components that will animate your outdoor space and inspire creativity:

- Containers: milk crates, buckets, tubs, baskets, pails
- Gardening equipment: Wheel barrows, carts, gloves, tools, watering cans, brooms, rakes, shovels, hoses
- Natural materials: twigs, leaves, flowers, grass, pine cones, seeds, beans, bark, feathers, moss, drift wood, straw, mulch, stones, stumps, shells, seed pods
- Baskets, crates, cardboard boxes and tubes
- Pieces of rain gutter, bamboo troughs
- Construction materials: building blocks, log rounds, sand, stones, small pieces of lumber, shells, cedar poles, twigs, pallets, gravel
- Plastic ABS pipe with numerous connector pieces
- Dirt, mud, cob, sand and water
- Sisal or coconut mats, sheets, blankets, canvas, tarps
- Rocks (too big to throw but not too big to roll)
- Ropes, hoops, tubes, balls, traffic cones
- Fabrics for temporary partition or covering
- Plastic or metal plates, cups, bowls, funnels, sponges, spoons, pots and pans

¹ Frode, S. (2012) “The Theory of Loose Parts”

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DESIGN ELEMENTS

The following list is a sample of design elements that you can incorporate into the design of your outdoor space.

- sand pit with lift and/or ramp for universal access
- puppet show wall
- living wall
- musical features; chimes, drums,
- board walk; varying widths, raised
- animal tracks throughout
- labyrinth
- outdoor classroom
- shelters of varying sizes
- murals; permanent and temporary (chalkboard walls)
- sun dials
- entrance arbors; willow, rounded, child-sized
- mazes; temporary, permanent
- stage
- bridges
- benches; logs, rocks, sculptures
- outdoor easels – permanent or mobile
- shade sails
- tennis wall (one player)
- water fountains; to drink from, to play with
- 'nests'
- culturally relevant elements

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