

Natural Playground Maintenance Guide



grow
play
learn

Nature Play Awaits

We are excited to introduce your new outdoor learning environment.

Refer to this maintenance guide as you utilize your new space to keep it beautiful, safe and inviting for play.

Maintaining your new space will ensure your behavioral settings and elements are enjoyed for many years to come.



Keep in touch! We look forward to hearing how your children and teachers use their outdoor learning environment.

Thank you for partnering with Green Space Learning and congratulations on your new natural playground.

Plantings & Garden Areas



Pruning

Prune plants to prevent overgrowth and to encourage blooms in flowering plants.

Prune flowering shrubs in the spring immediately after bloom. Prune Non-blooming shrubs In late winter or early spring. Heavy pruning to reduce the size of plants is best done in the late winter before regrowth starts. Refrain from heavy pruning in August, September, or October. Butterfly bush should be shaped in late November to prevent damage should icing occur in the winter months.

Watering

Water new plants about every three days for the first two weeks, less if it rains frequently or more if drought conditions are present. This establishes new growth. After two weeks aim for 1" of water per week. Watering twice a week is preferable to light watering daily in normal conditions. Water more frequently in drought conditions.

Plant Dormancy

It is normal for some perennial plants such as grasses and perennial flowers to go dormant in the fall, they may die out, disappear, and regrow in the spring. Some shrubs may lose their leaves.

Sod

Daily watering is required initially, for the first 2 weeks after installation to establish root systems. During drier and hotter days and months, grass will require more frequent watering. Mow as needed, recommended once a week in dormant season.



Grow & Explore

Garden Box Recommendations

- Hardy vine plants
- Annual flowers: Marigolds, Sunflowers, Zinnias, Lambs ear, Milk Weed
- Vegetables:
- Early Spring (Mid-March): Lettuce, carrots, spinach, beets, kale, swiss chard
- Mid-Spring (May-June): Beans, corn, zucchini, gourds, pumpkin June 1.
- Fall vegetables (Sept - Oct): Cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, beets, kale, swiss chard, parsley.

Exploration

Plant enough to allow children to touch, feel and explore the plants. They may even pull them out, this is how children learn about plants. Simply replant if possible.

Engagement

Encourage children to touch, smell, interact and use plant life in their play. They may pull leaves off a stem for use in the mud kitchen, as a loose part, hide in between the plants or simply touch and feel the flowers and leaves. This is part of nature learning and is encouraged.

Behavioral Settings



Water Sluice & Tables

The water pump is made by Bison Pumps and requires no maintenance. It also comes with a lifetime warranty. Should problems arise, contact Green Space for assistance. The sluice is made from cedar. Apply a coat of boiled linseed oil annually to preserve color if desired. Avoid using rice in outdoor sensory tables as it is harmful to birds.

For water and sensory tables, nature items such as pinecones, acorns, leaves, river rock or sand can be added for year round use or variation in sensory exploration. Water beads and Spangler snow are fun additions to sensory tables, add scoops and small containers for added fun. Avoid using rice in outdoor sensory tables as it is harmful to birds.

Play huts, Busy Boards, Pull-up Bar & Arbors

These settings are handcrafted and are made from cedar. To preserve color apply a coat of boiled linseed oil yearly. Trim vines periodically to prevent overgrowth and encourage new blooms.

Mud Kitchens, Stage, Outdoor Elements

Rinse with running water to prevent dirt from caking over time. Check underside of tables, mud kitchens, and other elements to remove insect habitats. These elements are made from pine. To extend the life of the wood, sand lightly and apply a coat of clear sealant.

Behavioral Settings



Loose materials (i.e. rocks and sand), Construction & Loose Parts Areas

Replenish loose material (gravel, sand, mulch, etc) as needed. Allow children to move loose parts to other areas of the playground to test and explore their ideas. Children will construct and create over a period of days or weeks to thoroughly explore and build upon their ideas. Allow time and movement of materials for this to occur. Items can be added according to children's needs and interests.

Hills and Embankment Slides

The slide hang bar is made from cedar which can be treated with a coat of boiled linseed oil periodically to preserve color if desired. Watch for any signs of erosion around the slide area. Please contact Green Space to assess the area should erosion occur. The grass on hills may become worn by heavy foot traffic over time. This is normal. Place new sod over bare spots to replenish.

Stump, Logs and Kiva Areas

Wood typically greys over time due to natural weathering. The integrity of the wood will still remain for a long period of time. Naturally, the bark on logs and stumps fall off. This is an integral part of the learning process of natural items and children observe this process as part of biology and nature appreciation.

CONTACT US

Thank you for partnering with Green Space Learning for your natural playground. Please keep in touch and let us know how we can continue to support nature play in your new space.

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