

# Children's Garden of the Senses

## Landscape and Child Development

### Application of the Design Guidelines to the Children's Garden

#### LANDSCAPE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

##### A Design Guide for Early Years-Kindergarten Play-Learning Environments

Published by Toronto District School Board and Evergreen, a not-for-profit organization

Refer to <https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/Landscape-Child-Development.pdf>

- The Toronto District School Board and Evergreen published landscape design guidelines for early-learning outdoor play environments that connect children to nature and that focus on meeting children's developmental needs. These guidelines focus on a new design approach that draws on knowledge of how physical space and natural features can stimulate healthy early child development. **Our design of the Children's Garden of the Senses follows this new design approach.**
- The design guidelines espouse the principles of:
  - Meeting children's development needs, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive
  - Appealing to children's senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch
  - Making spaces safe and accessible
  - Supporting inquiry and play-based learning
    - Offer a diversity of natural spaces: flexible, playful (colour, pattern, texture), graduated levels of ability, appropriate scale for children
    - Provide multi-purpose elements and spaces/rooms
    - Incorporate gardens, habitat areas, vegetable garden
    - Provide variety of natural elements, loose parts and materials
    - Provide learning materials
- The design guidelines indicate there are seven categories of early experiences in nature that should be considered in the design of children's spaces
  - Adventure
    - Children thrive on adventure - physical challenge, anticipation and mystery
    - Create spaces for climbing, balancing, jumping etc
  - Fantasy and imagination
    - Children naturally engage in creative play and imaginary worlds
    - Create spaces for interaction with living things and to facilitate storytelling and dramatic play
  - Animal allies
    - Children love animals
    - Create opportunities to observe and explore animals and their habitats and nurture connections to animals and how to care for them

- Maps and paths
  - Children have an inborn desire to explore
  - Create flexible spaces for them to explore and create their own paths
- Special places
  - Children want to find places for refuge
  - Create spaces for building things/refuges with loose natural parts
- Small worlds
  - Children role-play real life through imaginary scenarios
  - Provide natural materials, e.g. plants, soil and sand, that children can relate to and manipulate for creating their own small worlds
- Hunting and gathering
  - Children love to find, gather, and collect things
  - Holding treasure hunts and supplying natural materials, loose parts and enriching spaces with gardens and a variety of surfaces and textures will satisfy this impulse
- An outdoor play-based learning environment is comprised of both fixed and movable components. The design guidelines provide examples of the fixed and moveable components that support each of the developmental needs: physical, social, emotional and cognitive. We have outlined in the chart below the fixed and moveable components that we have incorporated into the design of our **Children's Garden of the Senses**.

## Children's Garden of the Senses - Fixed and Movable Components in Landscape Design

	<b>Development</b>			
	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>
<b>Children Need to</b>	Move, Climb, Dig, Jump, Hop, Skip, Balance, Lift, Carry, Pour etc	Socialize, Laugh, Free Play, Walk and Run Together, Play Games, Problem Solve Together	Contact with Nature, Explore Natural Areas, Plant a Seed, Tend a Garden, Relax under a Tree, Find, Collect and Gather Natural Things, Experience Nature with their Senses of Sight, Smell, Hearing, Taste and Touch	Make Decisions and Choices, Define their Environment, Build, Create, Do, Undo, Shape, Reshape, Hide-Reveal, Perform and Role Play, Be Quiet and Observe, Explore, Discover and Reflect
<b>Fixed Components of Play Spaces</b>				
Variety of hard and soft surfaces	●			●
Open areas e.g. grass, mounds and hills with places for sitting	●	●		●
Trees, tall shrubs	●			
Groves of trees with winding trails, meandering paths	●	●	●	
Groves of trees for treasure or scavenger hunts		●		●
Bridges	●			
Shaded areas with seating, shade shelters		●		

	Physical	Social	Emotional	Cognitive
Places for small groups (3-5), semi-private enclosed spaces		•		•
Spaces for quiet games e.g. checkers at a tree stump table		•		
Work or nature study areas, places for "building" projects		•	•	•
Sand play area		•	•	•
Outdoor classroom e.g. horseshoe-shaped rock seating		•		•
Stage, creative spaces e.g. our Gazebo		•		•
Playhouse, e.g. children's garden shed				•
Waterfall			•	•
Raised garden beds with seating		•		•
Variety of plant material, with different sensory qualities			•	•
Veggie and herb garden planter boxes			•	•
Habitat gardens e.g. Hummingbirds, butterflies			•	•

	Physical	Social	Emotional	Cognitive
Space for loose materials, e.g. sand, soil, mulch	•	•		•
Natural spaces to find, collect bugs			•	•
Spaces for displaying loose parts e.g. seeds, leaves, flowers, needles, pine cones, stones			•	•
<b>Moveable Components of Play Spaces</b>				
Flat topped logs, balancing logs	•			
Natural elements for climbing	•			
Flat topped boulders, armour stone, stepping stones	•			
Wooden benches, tree stump stools		•		
Sand, soil, mulch mounds	•	•		•
Play tables, work tables		•		•
Activity wall, e.g. palisade wall, totem poles				•
Chimes, musical instruments				•
Props				•
Water for watering plants, mixing with sand		•		•

	Physical	Social	Emotional	Cognitive
Veggie and herb gardens to plant and tend, e.g. runner beans and bean teepees, with annuals e.g. sunflowers, nasturtiums, etc			•	•
Fairy gardens				•
Variety of child sized tools, e.g. gardening tools, digging tools, water buckets, wheelbarrows, hand held lenses, bug nets and catchers, pencils/paper for writing observations	•			•
Hummingbirds, butterflies			•	•
Bird feeders			•	•
Building materials e.g. stones, branches		•		
Natural elements, twigs etc to create bug hotels			•	•
Seeds, leaves, flowers, needles, pine cones, stones			•	•