

Sandpits

Benefits

Sandpits are a fun way for children to socialise with others. Most children love to build and model objects out of sand. To ensure that children gain the best experience from your sandpit it is important to consider a few basic construction and maintenance guidelines.

Size

Size of the sandpit is based on the number of children using the service. A general guideline is 15m² for 20 children, 30m² for 40 children, and 40m² for 60 children. Sandpits can be of various shapes and even split level.

A minimum depth of 500mm sand is ideal to allow digging big, deep holes!

Setting

Sandpits are traditionally seen as a quiet play space and it is important they are positioned away from the main flow of traffic whilst still being easily supervised. Corners of playgrounds and alongside fences are preferred sandpit locations.

Incorporating natural elements such as boulders, dry creek beds and strappy leaf plants are popular for establishing a special “sense of place”.

Boulders can be placed into the sandpit or as edging. Boulders should be large enough to sit on or to be used as small building decks. They should measure from 300-700mm across and 300-450mm high. Boulders need to be stable and should not be able to be moved or tilted.

Round-off sharp edges of boulders or rocks.



Introduce plants to at least one edge of the sandpit. Include groundcover, strappy plants, plumed grasses and shade trees. A tap or access to water such as from a water tank or hand pump is recommended for play with wet sand.

Sand selection is important. Washed beach or river sand is recommended. Builder or brick sand is not recommended.



Shade

Sandpits should be adequately shaded. Deciduous trees can be used to provide shade in summer whilst open branches allow the sun to filter through in winter. Shade structures with removable sails or a cantilevered umbrella are great shade solutions.



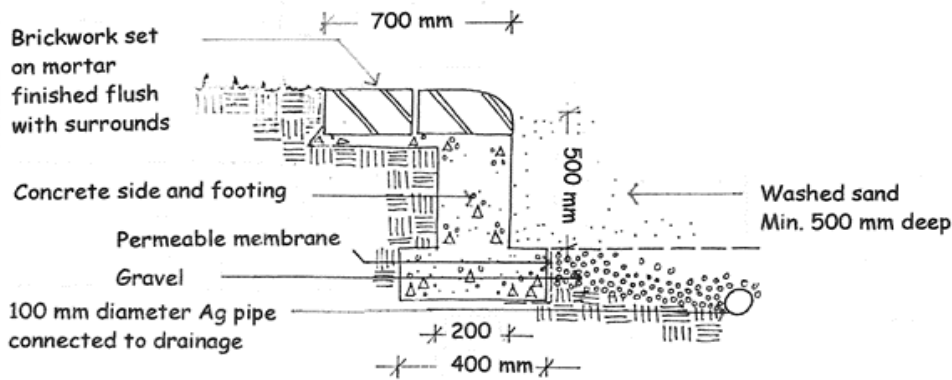


Figure 1



Construction

The sides of sandpits can be formed from logs or concrete, with the edge and paved areas constructed from concrete or pavers (refer to Figure 1). The inner edge facing the sandpit should not have any sharp corners or rough surface. Ensure that any timber used is not treated with CCA or creosote. For more information refer to the information sheet *Timber in Playspaces*.

Drainage

Adequate drainage includes the installation of a drainage membrane/geotextile fabric separating the sand from the gravel sub-base (refer to Figure 1). If the site is not free draining install agricultural pipes in the gravel and connect to storm water. Consult with a plumber to ensure drainage meets regulations.

Surround

A wide paved edge or unitary surface surrounding the sandpit makes it easy to sweep surface and keep the sand in place. The inclusion of a ledge adds to the play experience as children are inevitably drawn to placing their masterpiece on the ledge to dry.

Maintenance

Inspect the sandpit daily or before use. Rake sand to remove debris (sun and fresh air are good disinfectants), turned over monthly to aerate the sand and replenish when sand level drops 100mm below the top edge of the sandpit.

Remove sand contaminated by:

- Food
- Organic matter
- Human or animal faeces,
- Blood or other bodily fluids.

Where extensive contamination has occurred, all sand should be replaced.

Covers

Sandpits should be protected when not in use with a tight-fitting animal and vermin proof cover such as tarpaulin or specially designed cover. Shade cloth used as cover allows water to permeate through to avoid a pooling water hazard.



For regular shaped sandpits a square piece of shade cloth may be attached to a piece of hollow PVC pipe. For irregular shaped sandpits a cover may be assembled from a piece of shade cloth with a galvanised chain weight sewn into the hem to keep the cover in place.

Some sandpit covers also function as shade covers when hoisted above the sandpit during the day. Avoid creating trip hazards when placing raised fasteners or cleats.



Aeration and sunshine is the most effective way of sanitising sand.

