

Timber in Playspaces

Benefits

Timber is a common material used when constructing play spaces. It is an economic way of creating strong enduring structures. It has good environmental credentials such as being low in embodied energy, and carbon positive.

Preserving treatments increase longevity and protect the timber from decay, fungi, wood boring insects and termites.

Copper Chromium Arsenate (CCA).

Australia's most widely used wood preservative to date has been CCA which uses copper to control fungi, arsenic compounds to control termites, and chromium to fix the copper and arsenic compounds in the wood.

Creosotes

Creosotes are used for the protection of timber and timber structures against attack from insect pests and from fungal decay. There are essentially two types of creosote, one derived from distillation of coal tar (coal tar creosote) and the other from wood tar (wood creosote).

Use of Timber Treatments

AS 4685 requires that treated timber used for above or in-ground construction of playground items including equipment, fencing, garden walls, park furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating etc. exclude timber treated with CCA or creosote preservatives.



Timber is one of Australia's favourite building products

- Contact local timber suppliers, building, design and landscaping specialists
- Determine what types of timber are suitable for your project and where supplies are available
- Use sound building practices during construction
- Follow basic safety precautions when cutting or using timber



Appropriate Timber

AS 4685 requires timber used above ground is:

- treated in accordance with the AS 1604 series for Hazard Class H3, (excluding CCA and creosote); or
- durability Class 1 or Class 2 in accordance with AS 5604 (provisions apply).

Timber used in contact with the ground is:

- treated in accordance with the AS 1604 series for Hazard Class H4, (excluding CCA and creosote); or
- durability Class 1 or Class 2 in accordance with AS 5604 (provisions apply).

Appropriately treated timber for use in playspaces includes timber that has been treated with:

- Alkaline Copper Quaternary - ACQ
- Copper Azole - CA
- Light Organic Solvent Preservative - LOSP (note: not suitable for ground contact)

Non-treated naturally durable hardwood varieties of timber may be used although may be more expensive. Timber looking products made from recycled plastics are also available.

When purchasing timber for the construction of a playspace ensure that the products are treated with an Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) approved preservative (such as ACQ, CA and LOSP) that does not contain arsenic compounds or purchase timber (eg. hardwood) that has natural resistance to rotting and termites. Retain treated timber purchase documentation for treated timber used as part of your playground safety management system records.



To find out what timbers are naturally rot and insect resistant and recommended for landscape applications contact your nearest timber supplier.

It is recommended that all timber is landscape grade and nails/screws are stainless steel or galvanised. Ensure timber is dressed and finished smooth to eliminate splinters .

Maintaining Timber

For existing playground equipment and items constructed with timber treated with CCA or creosote that is in good condition, seal with an oil-based polyurethane or paint regularly. It is also recommended for all timber items to be coated with an oil-based paint or linseed oil to prolong longevity.

Regularly inspect timber items (such as furniture, stepping logs, forts, jouncing boards etc.) for:

- Wear and tear - repair or replace timber as required.
- Splitting - caulk gaps or replace timber as required.
- Splintering - sand smooth to remove splinters and burrs on a regular basis.
- Water penetration - repair and seal timber. Replace timber when required.
- Warping - plane and/or secure with additional screws.
- Protruding nails, screws and bolts - ensure that nails/screws are embedded, finished flush to the surface or countersunk. Domed headed screws may be utilised. Ensure bolt threads do not protrude more than 8mm. Check that threads do not present burrs or splinters - sand to a smooth finish. Consider using stainless steel self-tapping screws to secure timber boards.



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