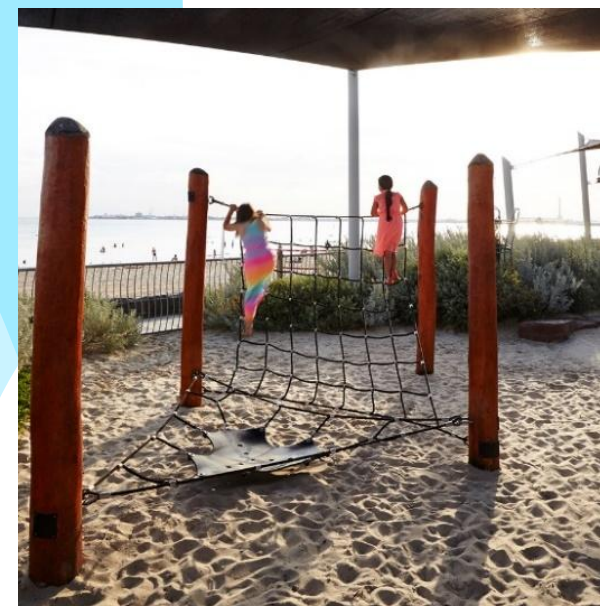


Fiona Robbé
Landscape architecture,
horticulture and playspace design

Nature Play: what it is & what it isn't

Mary Jeavons & Fiona Robbé

Play Australia Webinar
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Outline

- Do we need nature play?
- What does nature play look like?
- The nature play continuum
- Standards, risks and benefits
- Case studies
- Discussion



Do children need to be in touch with nature?

Children have a biological predisposition to interact with the physical world



Why is playing in nature important?

- Sense of place and identity
- Environmental stewardship
- Sustainability



Why do children like nature play?

- Open-ended, adaptable
- Endless source of sensory stimuli
- Seasonal variations
- Changeable and unpredictable
- Physical challenge and movement



What does nature play look like?

- Out of doors
- Access to living things
- Natural materials – timber, logs, rocks/stone, trees, grass...
- Loose, manipulable materials
- Possibility for decision making/judgement/autonomy



What ISN'T nature play?

- Fully indoors
- No loose materials, living things/plants
- All materials and surfaces man made
- No decision-making opportunities
- Highly prescriptive purpose
- Absence of chance encounters
- No mess/seasonal change/growth



The continuum of nature play



Bush play

Nature play lies this way...

Faux wood structures

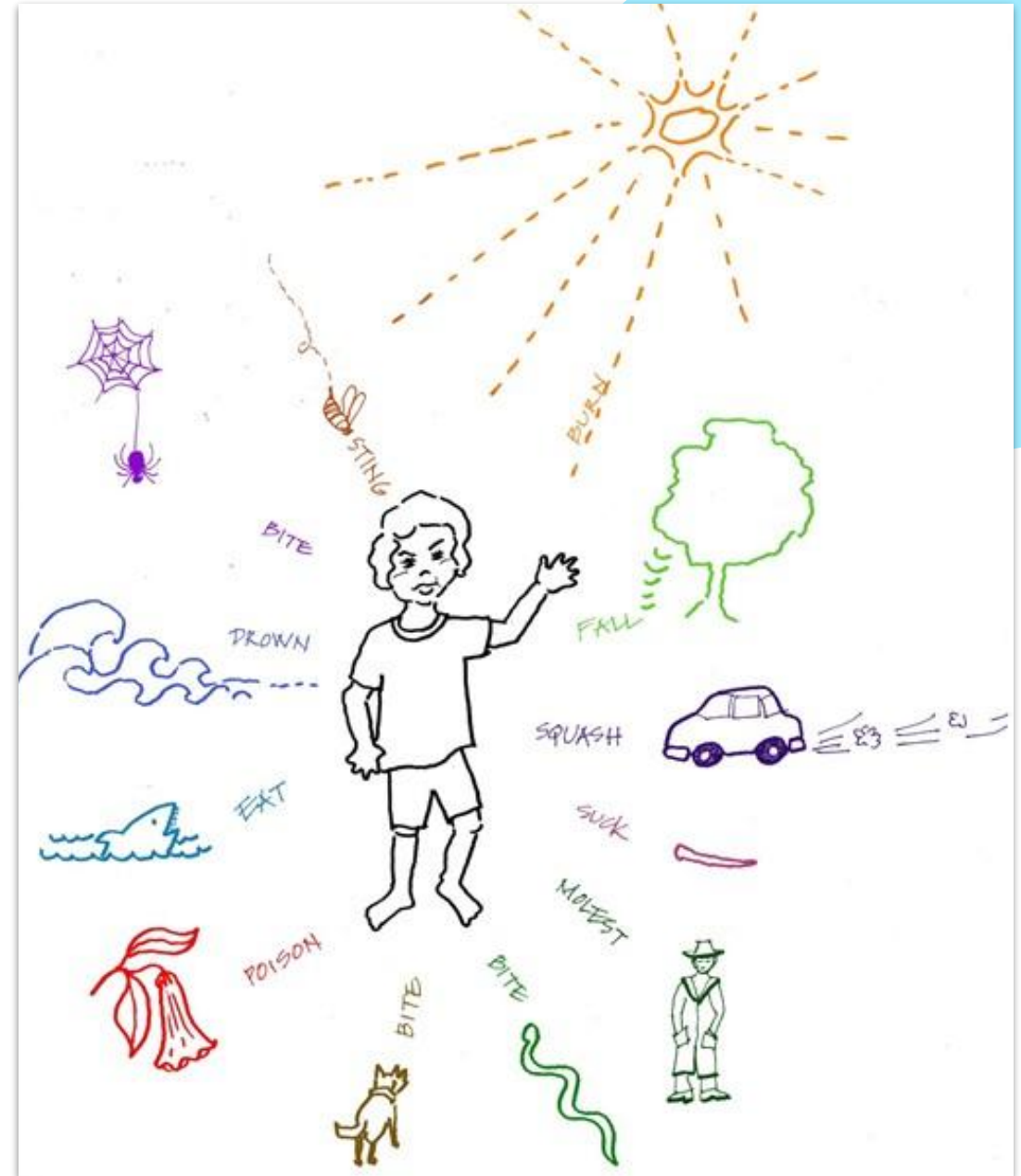
Loose parts play



Resistance to nature play

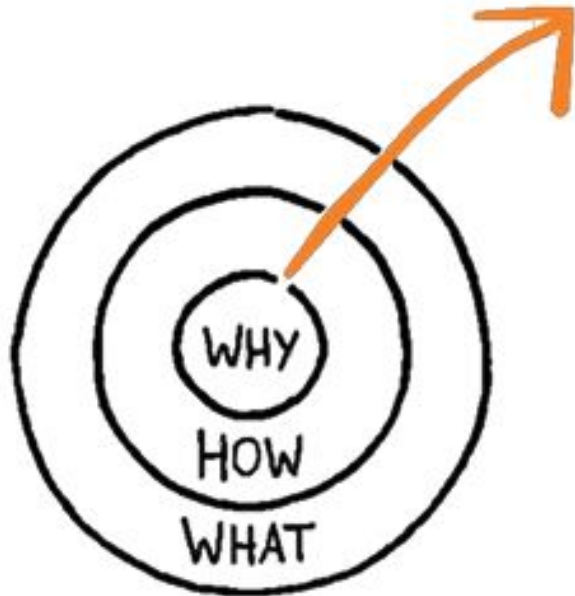
Concerns about:

- Injury/safety
- Control – trust in children's judgement
- Mess - loose materials spread everywhere
- Things that bite and sting
- Lack of durability
- Maintenance/costs



Worth the risk?

- Become a champion of the cause!
- Start with WHY
- Best Practice examples - known projects in similar settings
- Risk benefit Assessment



Maintenance Mindset

- Consider the bigger values/ benefits
- Smart design
- Engage maintenance team
- Durable materials
- Some level of containment
- Be realistic and allocate budgets for maintenance



Planting as a Key Element of Design for Play

Planting (trees, shrubs and understorey) provides:

- high level of amenity
- significant cooling effect
- rich sensory input
- seasonal change
- a magnet for other living things
- a source of loose play materials- leaves, flowers, twigs, pods, branches
- spatial scale/division of spaces

Planting allows us to 'provide' loose play elements when 'looseness' is otherwise frowned upon

However:

In many settings, planting is highly vulnerable- especially in schools and Early Childhood Centres.

It is very difficult to establish planting in small spaces with many children in long day care.

- Plant them in the right place
- Protect the roots
- Fence them off if required

The value of a gardener!



Case Studies

Growing Wild at Melbourne Zoo



Plum Garland, Reserve Port Melbourne



Merri Park, Northcote VIC



Bollygum Park, Kinglake





Beaumaris Park



Kensington Community Child Care Centre



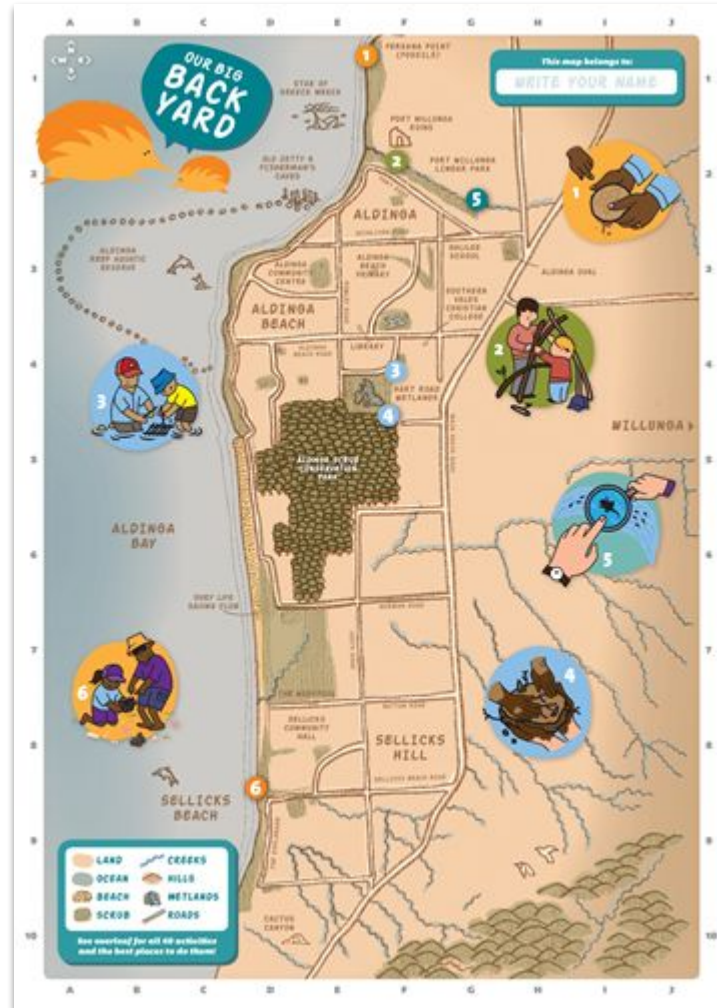
Ivanhoe East Primary School



Lizard Log at Western Sydney Parklands



60 things to do before you're 12 at Aldinga and Sellicks



Samuel Gilbert Public School




Yokine Regional Playground



Conclusion

- Commit to nature play
- If we want kids to manage their future world and its natural systems, they have to fall in love with it first





Thankyou! Any Questions?

Mary Jeavons, Director

03 9387 7337

www.jeavons.net.au

mary@jeavons.net.au

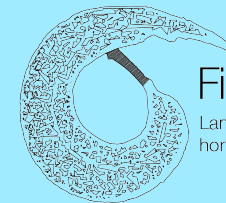


Fiona Robbé, Director

02 9653 1045

www.architectsofarcadia.com.au

fiona@architectsofarcadia.com.au



Fiona Robbé

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