



School Greening Design Guide Recommendations for LAUSD

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^{LA} **LSYC**

Los Angeles Living Schoolyard Coalition



Mission:

Our mission is to create and advocate for equitable access to nature and healthy school environments designed with the community to support: safe outdoor education, physical and mental health, social and emotional well-being, and climate resilience for Los Angeles County's public-school students and communities.

LAUSD Commitment to School Greening

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL GARDEN GUIDEBOOK

A guidebook for Site Administrators on how to create a garden that works best for the school community.



Carthay Environmental Magnet School's garden with native plants, a rain garden sitting area, an edible garden, and rainwater harvesting from the roof.

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HABITAT GARDEN

Habitat Gardens are a "natural laboratory" where students can learn about the physical elements and ecological phenomena of a native habitat. Instructional opportunities are plentiful as students can explore topics such as the diversity of plants, animal species, soil types, the water cycle, stormwater retention, wildfire resilience as well as the role that humans play protecting the natural environment.

Habitat gardens are generally low maintenance since native plants thrive in their natural environments with minimal care. New plants will require water until they are established which is typically a year or two after planting. After establishment, water use is very minimal and often not needed at all depending on the plant species. Some plants might even die from summer watering because they have evolved to not receive water in our dry Mediterranean climate!

Keep in mind that most native California plants have a dormancy period where they may look dead, but they are actually alive. Do not remove them from the ground during this period as they will bounce back during their growing season. Also, habitat gardens that include bioswales or other water retention features may require additional maintenance to ensure that the water infiltration capacity remains effective. Less than optimal infiltration capabilities can lead to ponding, possible mosquito infestations, and overwatering of surrounding plant species.

EXAMPLES OF HABITAT GARDENS INCLUDE:

- Butterfly Gardens
- Native Habitats
- Meadows
- Forests
- Bioswales
- Other variations—based on specific ecoregions



SATURN ES



Carthay Environmental Magnet School's bioswale captures rainwater and prevents flooding in an area that was previously grass.

HABITAT GARDEN FEATURES



HABITAT GARDEN MAINTENANCE

- Prune as needed to encourage balance growth and attractiveness.
- Weed invasive species a minimum of every 3 months, and as needed seasonally.
- Water per the recommended amount until plants are established, then reduce or eliminate watering, depending on plant type.



Esperanza ES SEEDS Garden



El Dorado ES SEEDS Garden



LAUSD School Design Guide

School Design Guide

Los Angeles Unified School District

August 2023

The Living Schoolyard Coalition has identified barriers in the current version of the LAUSD Design Guide to quality schoolyard greening project design and implementation.

LAUSD School Design Guide

School Design Guide

Los Angeles Unified School District

August 2023

- No clear cut guidance for **comprehensive** school greening
- Specific sections do not reflect District goals (e.g. 30% greening, 20% tree canopy, new schoolyard definition)
 - Examples
 - 2.2.c.1.c. Examples of alternative methods to help “green” schoolyards include...**exterior planting at school entries and perimeters.**
 - 2.2.c.1.d. Locations for implementing the Greening Program include **school entries** and **perimeters**, playfields, kindergarten play spaces, instructional gardens, and other **strategic planting areas.**
 - 2.2.d.3.j. Trees and tree wells shall be located in such a way, **so they do not interfere** with children’s natural instinct to take the most direct path from one area to another.

LAUSD School Design Guide

School Design Guide

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August 2023

- Process for community engagement is not clear
- Hardscape space allocation for P.E. appears to be prioritized over all other outdoor space functions (instructional and play).
 - P.E. hardscape/paved areas not regulated by CDE and are not included in Title 5 Code of regulations.
 - According to the CDE, as new educational concepts [e.g. outdoor education] emerge, school design must follow those concepts.
 - At local and state level, P.E. instruction is evolving; outdoor spaces can be multifunctional
 - Natural materials can be a cheaper and more effective fall surface

LAUSD + LSYC Partnership

LYSC Recommendations

In partnership with members of the LSYC and other LAUSD stakeholders:

1. Update current Design Guide to better reflect the health, social-emotional, and educational benefits of access to nature and outdoor learning spaces.
2. Develop a separate set of design guidelines for outdoor learning and play spaces (new construction and schoolyard improvement projects)

Opportunity to
develop strong
framework that
clearly prioritizes
climate resilience
and well-being of
ALL LAUSD
students



Example 1:

Reimagine
learning and
play space
allocation
and design

Non-optimal Design



Better Design



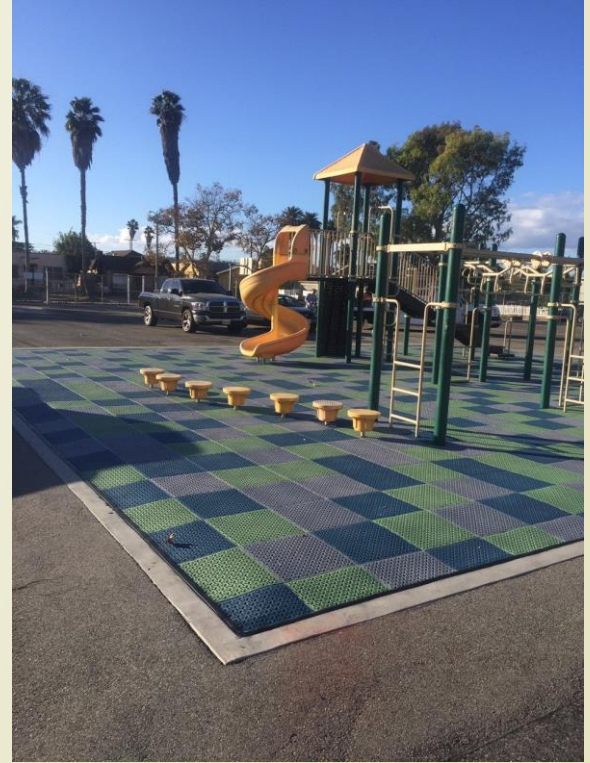
Example 2:

Expand
district
approved
surface
materials

Engineered Wood Fiber



Resilient Surfacing Tile



Example 3:
Engage larger
community in
school greening
efforts!

