

What Does a Natural Playground Cost?

Because natural playgrounds incorporate the use of many natural elements, such as boulders, rocks, sand, soil, wood, water, and indigenous vegetation as integral parts of the play experience, material costs can be low. Further, these projects are so exciting, your entire community will help with donated materials, labor, and money, thus further reducing the cost. As a result, natural play environments will cost less than ones that use only manufactured equipment. But more importantly, the "play value" is significantly higher.

Play value = how many children can be served by one piece of play equipment as compared to its cost. A simple climbing structure that accommodates 6 children might cost \$4,000 = low play value. A natural boulder that is part of the landscaping and on which 10 children can climb costs \$0 = high play value. On the other hand, to ensure an exciting, integrated, natural-looking play environment which takes advantage of the site's features while reflecting the specific needs of each play group, more creativity is required from us, the playground designers. However, to put our very reasonable fees into perspective, though equipment companies say their designers provide "free services," their cost is actually between 22% and 25% of the cost of their equipment. Spend \$35,000 on a piece of equipment, and you're actually paying up to \$9000 for their "free" design services.

You can be assured that the overall cost of natural playgrounds will be less. More importantly, the natural environments will be unique, more attractive, more creative, more pleasing, more challenging, more satisfying, more inspiring, and more natural. Just like you want them to be. AND they'll be a pleasing asset to your community!

We base our very reasonable design fees on square footage, and then base our range of estimated construction costs on the design fees. The reason there is a range, is that there are a number of variables which affect construction costs, such as donated materials, time, and equipment.

Time and again we have proved that the overall costs for Natural Playgrounds, including design, contract document, and construction costs, are less than the cost for installing equipment that tries replicating the play opportunities kids have on Natural Playgrounds. Notice we said "tries," because manufactured playgrounds can't even come close.

Please also see our page about natural playground environments.

Our Finding Money page has some great sources of money for natural playgrounds.

Why Installing Playground Equipment is So Expensive:

You pay for:

- the design cost and
- the cost of the manufacturer's rep services (22-25% of the purchase price, which is hidden in the high price of equipment),
- the cost of shipping,
- the cost of installation,
- the cost of installation supervision,
- the cost of fall-surfacing materials, and
- the cost of the border that holds in the fall surfacing material!

And, due to the constant changes in equipment safety regs, you'll probably have to pay to replace your equipment every few years!