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*promoting the value of play*

## Digging Patches

Digging in soil provides different play experience from sand play, and should be provided in a separate area, away from the sand pit to prevent any spilt soil from mixing with the sand area.

The digging patch provides opportunities for large muscle play given that metal spades are often used. For this reason it must be sited where it can be easily seen and supervised by staff. To minimise accidents it must also be kept out of the main traffic areas. As this area is frequently messy due to the nature of the play, sitting away from entry areas or immediately outside buildings is advisable for aesthetic reasons and to avoid the trampling of mud indoors.

Where boundaries are necessary these may be defined by shrub planting, smooth boulders, logs, planks, bricks or any combination of these.

Digging areas need:

- ◆ a convenient water supply;
- ◆ to be large enough for large muscle activity;
- ◆ a depth of **500-600 mm**;
- ◆ soil which can be manipulated by small children, (add old sand and lawn clippings and dig over periodically to keep this workable); and
- ◆ to be sited away from underground services.

Having an old table or cable reel adjacent allows the soil to be utilised as mud play.

PRAV, on advice from EEEEC, recommends that sandy loam is best to use when topping up the digging patch which can be bought from a reliable garden supplier. Depending on the particular batch, you may need to dig in some extra sand, which can be taken from the sandpit – it's a bit like mixing a cake, too much sand and it looks like a sand pit, not enough sand and the soil compacts, and is difficult for the children to turn over, particularly important for younger children who are often using plastic spades. We don't recommend using donated top soil as we can't know of any contaminants which might be in it, e.g. glass or chemical residues.

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