



#PlayToday

info@playaustralia.org.au

www.playaustralia.org.au

*promoting the value of play*

## EDGING OF PLAYSPACES

Edging is intended to retain playground mulch levels at or above the recommended minimum depths, and to limit the footprint of a playspace to a defined area.

Experience suggests that playground mulch needs to be topped up significantly less often when it is contained effectively.

Edging is often constructed out of upright timber sleepers pinned to the ground at regular intervals. While cheap and functional, this style of edging can also be problematic as it can be a trip hazard and barrier to access by people with a disability. Upright timber edging can also present difficulties for maintenance as it is hard to mow around and can warp and lift as it ages.

Where possible, Play Australia recommends that playground edging should be installed in a way that allows a smooth transition from the adjacent surface to the mulched area, with both surfaces sitting flush (level) with each other.

Alternatives to upright timber edging that allow a smoother transition include:

- Partially excavating the playground area so that mulch is retained by the surrounding soil (subsurface drainage will normally be required).
- Concrete footpaths running alongside the playground area can double as playground edging, while improving access for all abilities.
- Mounded garden beds positioned around the edge of the playspace.

Other alternatives to upright timber edging include:

- Rock boulders, logs and similar.
- Topping timber edging with a wide, flat timber plank (providing a more secure and natural step).
- Creative use of existing site features such as walls and fencing.
- Concrete edging which, although costly, is sometimes used due to its durability and flexibility to shape into a variety of organic curves and angles.

Although it has become more common in recent years to see narrow metal or plastic strip garden edging (such as *FormBoss*) used around some playspaces, significant caution should be exercised.

Strip edging is rarely if ever designed for heavy duty use and can be easily displaced, or pop loose, through normal wear and tear, weather, light foot traffic and/or curious fingers. This in turn can expose further hazards such as sharp edges and/or fixings such as pegs and screws.

As garden-style strip edging has a very narrow visual profile it is (intentionally) difficult to see, potentially creating a serious trip hazard even when exposed by only a few millimetres. This kind of exposure can readily occur due to either movement in the edging itself, or where adjacent surfaces drop through light foot traffic and/or weathering.

Whilst the use of CCA Treated timber is no longer recommended for play equipment, there is no such requirement for edging.

Edging needs to be located outside the minimum impact area of playground equipment, as specified in Australian Standard AS4685. Note that impact areas are minimums and individual designers or playspace managers may prefer to offset edging further than these minimums for a variety of reasons.

#### *Supervised Early Childhood Services*

Edging must be at least 1.5m from the nearest piece of equipment where a child can balance or stand 600mm or more above the adjacent surfacing. (Edging needs to be at least 1.7m away if the adjacent equipment is between 1.5m and 1.8m high.)

For equipment with an element of motion (such as swings and carousels) the offset may need to be significantly higher – confirm the exact distance with the original equipment manufacturer, or seek the advice of an experienced playground designer or safety assessor.

Note that in some cases larger offsets are sometimes recommended by some responsible authorities, such as state education departments.

#### *Other play spaces*

For equipment where a child can balance or stand 600mm or more above the adjacent surfacing edging must be a minimum on 1.5m away, then progressively increasing to 2.5m for equipment up to 3m high.

For equipment with an element of motion (such as swings and carousels) the offset may need to be significantly higher – confirm the exact distance with the original equipment manufacturer, or seek the advice of an experienced playground designer or safety assessor.

Note that larger offsets may be recommended by some responsible authorities, such as state education departments.