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News from Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund



March eNEWS

## ***Thank You for Coming to our Playground Seminar!***



Our seminar, *Maximize Outdoor Time with Planning and Design: Playground Design and Low-Cost Solutions for Your Outdoor Play Space*, at Save the Bay in Providence was a huge success! Many of the nearly 70 professionals who attended left inspired by our presenters and were ready to make improvements to their outdoor playspaces right away!

A lot of fun ideas for what to do with an empty space were shared during the session. Here are some of the favorite examples for ways to add play value to your space in easy and very inexpensive ways. If you are feeling inspired to get outside and shake up your playspace, make sure to send us images of what you do!

If you didn't get the chance to attend this session, we are hoping to continue to offer these inspirational design forums later this year.

## ***Do It Yourself Outdoor Projects!***

### ***Build a Willow Tunnel***

Who doesn't love having a secret tunnel to crawl through and explore? One of the most popular ideas that came from the seminar was the willow tunnel. It is a fun way to create a path and explore nature at the same time. It can be planted right in the ground or in planters, and can be varying lengths and heights as well.

**[Click here for instructions on how to create your very own willow tunnel.](#)**



### ***Install a Tire Climber***

Incorporating tires is a great way to add a lot of play value to your outdoor space at a very low cost. Often you can find clean, recycled tires from a local repair shop for free! And they can be used in a variety of ways: as planters, balance beams, and sandboxes. They can also be used as a climber, and building one can be a great weekend project. If interested in creating your own tire climber, please keep the following in mind:

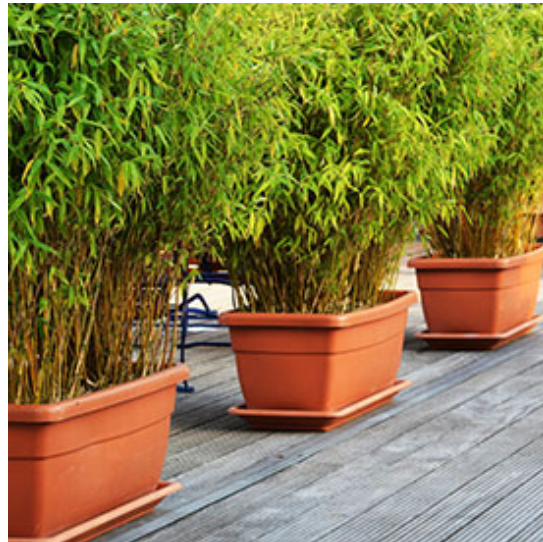
1. Make sure the tires you select are still in fair condition and do not have any steel belting showing or anything protruding from the tire.
2. Clean the tires thoroughly prior to installation to remove any solvents or unwanted materials that may have been deposited on the tire surface. They can be painted with an exterior-grade paint too!
3. Install tires with 3/8"X3" lag bolts with 2" fender washers or comparable timberlock screws. You may also want to have a wood or steel plate to bolt through to keep the tire stable.
4. Be sure to drill some holes at the bottom of each tire so water can escape.
5. Any pole you attach the tires to should be 8"-12" in diameter and set in concrete. Telephone poles or mooring poles are a good choice. Be sure to sand the pole to ensure a smooth surface and router off the top of the pole to avoid sharp edges.



Photo courtesy of 4Site, LLC"

## ***Creating a Bamboo Divider***

Bamboo is a versatile, inexpensive, and fast-growing grass plant that can be used in your outdoor play space as a divider, creating meandering pathways and opportunities to explore the environment. It can be cut down for an instant change to the space and is durable enough for even the most curious of children. Bamboo is very easy to grow and once established will need very little water or care. However, it is considered an invasive plant and it can very easily grow out of control, so always plant bamboo in containers and never directly in the ground!



**[Click here to learn more about Bamboo Gardening.](#)**

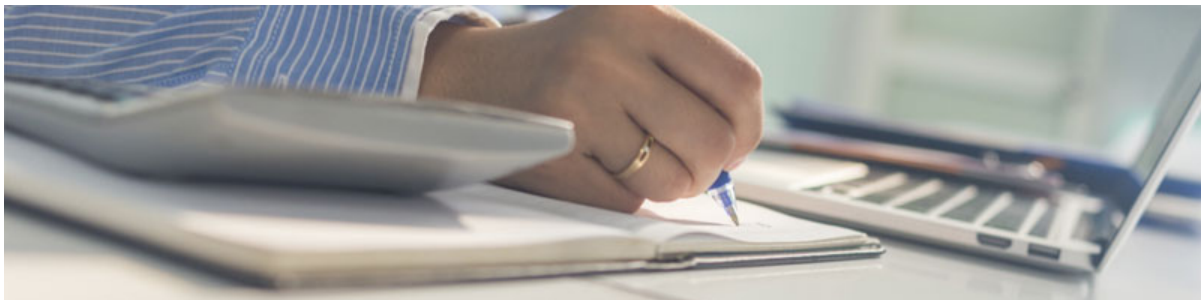
## ***Plastic Equipment in Your Playground – What You Need to Know.***

It can be very easy to stock up on inexpensive low-tech molded plastic outdoor equipment from your local retail store but there are a few things to know before making any purchases. Most of the items that can be easily found are meant for residential use – not commercial use. This means they were never designed to withstand the amount use they will get in an early learning child care center. Residential equipment is not constructed to adhere to commercial safety specifications. The upside though is that many of the same manufacturers that produce these residential items also produce a commercial line. When researching this type of equipment, verify that it is age-appropriate and conforms to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards.



If you decide to go ahead and use residential plastic structures on your play space, you should understand that in order to comply with national safety standards, you must anchor this equipment to the ground. The easiest way to remember this is if a child's foot needs to leave the ground to use the equipment, then it needs to be securely fixed in place. This way the lightweight equipment can't tip over or become airborne with a gust of wind. Also always remember that even with this smaller scale equipment you are still required to have **safety surfacing** underneath!

## ***Applying for Grants to Help Supplement Your Playground Fund***



Submitting grants can be a great way to add to your funding sources when planning your playground project. There are a lot of different grant opportunities out there, but we found a comprehensive list from the Little Tikes Company to get you started. **[Click here to Download the PDF.](#)**

Here are a few tips for increasing your odds for success when grant writing:

1. Read the grant proposal thoroughly and note specific deadlines. Give yourself enough time to prepare your request.
2. Include all information required and respond very specifically to the request. Don't leave anything blank!
3. Follow all the guidelines for the submission exactly.
4. Be concise, clear and complete in your responses. The grant reviewers have a lot of other information to review too!
5. Know a little but about the grantor and how your request responds to their mission.
6. Be creative! Writing a grant is an opportunity to articulate your ideas for how to improve your space. The grant writing experience will help you think through those points and be able to better talk about your project.

***The Quality Space by Design section in our [Resource Library](#) has been updated. Be sure to [check it out here!](#)***

## ***About RICCELFF***

*The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.*

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