

Champion shade

Frequently asked questions



Q: Why do we need shade structures if students are already required to wear hats when outdoors at school?

A: Slip, slop, slap, seek and slide!

There are five ways to be protected from UV exposure that can lead to skin cancer, and seeking shade is one of the most effective ways to reduce exposure to UV.

Shade structures at schools give students the opportunity to stay out of the sun or take breaks from the sun. When an outdoor play area is shaded it can reduce UV exposure by up to 75%.¹

Shade can also significantly reduce the surface temperature of playground equipment and floor materials. This can prevent burn injuries and extend play time for children.²



Q: I would like to know more about what type of shade is going to be most useful in the school. Where should I start?

A: Once you have decided that a site is a high priority for shade development, it's important to study the site in detail to make sure shade is placed where it will have the most impact.

This can be done through a [Shade Audit](#), which supports you to determine existing shade and assess the need for additional shade. The audit will also help you to think about whether it's best to use natural or built shade, and whether it should be a permanent or temporary shade structure.



Q: I would like to provide shade over an outdoor area, but there isn't sufficient open space for a shade structure?

A: Consider multipurpose structures that serve as both shade and usable spaces or consider vertical shading options and trees. When space is limited, a vertical trellis or lattice screen covered with climbing plants, creepers or vines is an effective method for shading.

¹ Parsons, P., Neale, R., Wolski, P. & Green, A., 'The shady side of solar protection, Medical Journal of Australia, 1998; 168: 327-330.

² Pfautsch, S., Wujeska-Klaue, A., & Walters, J. 'Outdoor playgrounds and climate change: Importance of surface materials and shade to extend play time and prevent burn injuries', Building and Environment, 2022, 1-13



Aboriginal Respect Symbol. Designed by
Marcus Lee Design for Cancer Council NSW.



FAQs



Q: I'm concerned about the cost and resources for the ongoing maintenance of shade structures. Are shade structures costly to maintain?

A: To reduce maintenance costs, consider using high quality, durable materials that require less maintenance and ensure structures come with warranty options offered by the manufacturers. Make sure you consult an expert to help decide the best type of structure that will last.

While some types of shade structures may mean ongoing maintenance costs, it's important to remember there are potential cost savings in other areas when you implement shade. For example:

- installing shade may reduce energy bills as it helps to keep areas cooler
- there can be cost savings on the maintenance of outdoor equipment due to less sun damage.



Q: What do I need to do to maintain the shade structure?

A: Shade structures are built to last but harsh weather conditions can affect the structure over time. Carry out regular checks on the structure, particularly after any major wind event including storms. Tree debris can damage the sails so cutback overhanging branches and trees.

Check the manufacturer's instructions and product information and keep this in a place at school where future staff can access it.



Q: How do I find out what planning permits or approvals are required to build a shade structure in a playground?

A: If it's in a school playground, seek advice from the relevant school infrastructure representatives for your school regarding the planning of shade in your playground.

If it's a council playground, your local council will know the legal requirements they need to address to build a playground structure.

More simple playgrounds may have less applications and assessment requirements, include those where the:

- structure is less than 3.6m high from the ground
- structure covers an area of less than 20 square meters
- shade sail material is permeable, allowing water and air to pass through.

FAQs



Q: How long does the installation process typically take? Will the installation disrupt regular school activities?

A: The time to install a shade structure will vary depending on size, design complexity, and site preparation requirements. If possible, schedule installation to occur during the school holidays.

Example installation timeframes from recent school shade projects include:

- St Monica's Primary School - 2 months (The structures consisted of 5 sails secured to 7 poles, totaling 220sqm of material)
- Lalor Pre School – 2 months (the structure consisted of 3 sails (8m x 6m, 6.5m x 6.5m, 10m x 3.8m))
- Brookfield Multiplex – Rooftop Kindergarten – 3 months (the structure consisted of 30m x 12m wide truss structure with shade cloth and netting)



Q: How much does a shade structure typically cost?

A: The cost to install a shade structure will vary depending on size, design complexity and site preparation requirements. Most shade installation companies offer a free measure and quote service.

Example costs from recent school shade projects include:

- St Monica's Primary School - \$30,000 (The structures consisted of 5 sails secured to 7 poles, totaling 220sqm of material)
- Lalor Pre School – \$26,000 the structure consisted of 3 sails (8m x 6m, 6.5m x 6.5m, 10m x 3.8m)



Q: We want to plant more trees surrounding the school playground, but how do we know what trees will be best?

A: There are lots of great resources to help you decide on the most appropriate natural shade to use, including what species to plant that are best suited to your location.

Some of the things to consider when selecting the species include:

- fast growing and established trees will offer immediate shade
- longer growing species can be more robust and provide shade that lasts for generations
- drought tolerant trees require less water
- some tree species drop less branches than others.

You can speak to your local nursery, horticulturalist, landscape architect and Council for guidance.

FAQs



Q: What are some of the things to consider with tree care and maintenance?

A: It's important to proactively manage trees to reduce the risk of falling limbs and provide adequate care. An annual inspection of trees by an arborist is a great way to understand issues through a report, which can then inform a tree pruning plan.



Q: How can we involve students in a natural shade project, like tree planting?

A: NSW Government provides guidance about how to incorporate the importance of [trees in school curriculum](#). This resource includes guidance on conducting a tree survey to identify the number of different tree species in the school grounds and their health. Strategies for caring for the trees can then be developed.

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