

The Price to Play



I'm quite sure that most of you reading this live within walking distance of a playground. By walking distance I mean that if your car wasn't working and the temperature wasn't 100 degrees, you could put the kids on their bikes or in the stroller and get to the playground without too much effort. There is a playground in every elementary school, most every park and several other random public spaces. Some are available anytime of the day while others are locked down after school hours. In any case, today's playgrounds are a lot different from what I grew up with.

My favorite park as a kid had a three level metal rocket ship with a metal slide coming out of the second level. Of course, the metal slide was facing west. We learned to go down that thing with our legs, arms and hands not touching the hot slide. We didn't have anything to slow us down and we shot out the bottom doing about mach 2 into a gravel lined hole. Good times! The playgrounds today are safer, offer more play activities and are much more sophisticated, even including electronic components. But do they offer more creative play opportunities for kids?

The biggest change is the cost of building a playground. I'm sure the rocket ship I played on could be built today for less than \$20,000 while that playground near your house may have cost over \$1 million dollars with all the fancy equipment, safety surfacing, shade covers, restroom and fencing. We are currently working on a four acre playground with some grass, play equipment, splash pad, a few shade shelters with tables and benches, a restroom and a parking lot. The cost of this playground will be over \$2 million dollars!

Circumstances have definitely changed over the last 50 years, but one thing is still the same... kids need to play.

Consultant of the Month

Gary Congdon, AIA, LEED Accredited, is Principal of Lee & Sakahara's Las Vegas office. He is always



professional and friendly. He has been involved with many organizations including the American Institute of Architects (AIA), National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP Southern Nevada Chapter) and on the Government Affairs Committee, and served two years on the Area Zone Advisory Committee for the Clark County School District. He actively participates in the design, planning, and construction administration of all projects. Gary is a pleasure to work with and we look forward to working with him in the future.

"It is the child in man that is the source of his uniqueness and creativeness, and the playground is the optimal milieu for the unfolding of his capacities and talents."
 — Eric Hoffer

FAVORITE FLORA: ACACIA STENOPHYLLA- SHOESTRING ACACIA



Evergreen foliage and columnar, upright growth are rare qualities for desert trees; the Shoestring Acacia (*Acacia stenophylla*) has both. This tree, a native to Australia, grows 20-40 feet tall and spreads approximately 15-20 feet. It has long, up to 12 inches, and narrow, ¼ to ½ inch wide gray-green leaves. Clusters of yellow ball shaped flowers appear mostly in spring but can occur throughout the year. These flowers give way to long seed pods that look similar to a string of beads. The shoestring Acacia's natural habitat consists mostly of desert river and stream edges making this tree drought tolerant but still able to tolerate periodic wet soils. While young trees can look a bit awkward, Shoestring Acacias grow fast and quickly turn in to a striking tree. The open structure and narrow leaves provides filtered shade which allows for healthy growth of a variety of shrubs and groundcovers beneath it.

Shoestring Acacias can be used in a variety of desert landscape roles due to its unique characteristics. It grows tall enough to be used as a screen to tall walls or buildings. The columnar growth allows for it to be planted in narrow spaces were a wide branching Mesquite or Palo Verde could not fit. Its upright form and ability to withstand extreme reflected heat make it ideal for parking lots, streetscapes and along sidewalks. This tree looks great planted alone, showing off its silhouette, as well as in a grove or row. Like all evergreens, the Shoestring Acacia does produce some leaf, flower and pod litter year round and should be avoided around pools.

Photo of the Month



Between A Rock And A Hard Place
 Bonanza Peak, NV
 Stan Southwick