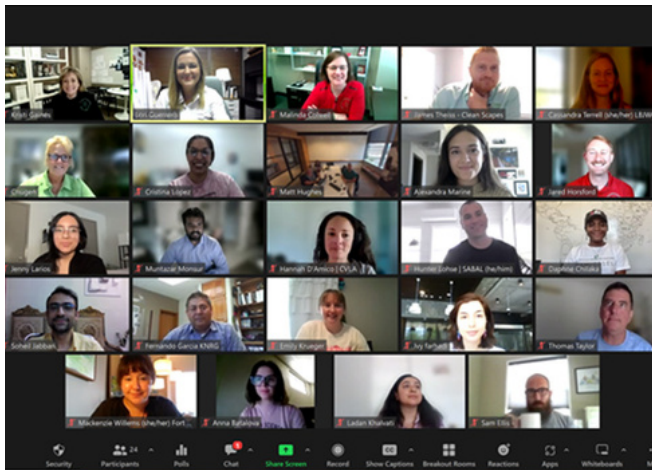# DESIGNER NEWSLETTER

| VOL. 3, ISSUE 2 | OCTOBER 2023 |

Welcome to the New Members of OLE! Designer Network

Thank you to all OLE! Texas training participants in July 2023:

Alexandra Marine*
Anna Batalova*
Cassandra Terrell*
Chenxia Pu*
Crissa Nugen*
Daphne Chilaka*
Emily Krueger*
Fernando Garcia Jr*
Hannah D'Amico*
Ivy Farhadi*
James Theiss*
Ladan Khalvati*
Mackenzie Willems*
Soheil Jabbari*
Susan Cita*
Thomas Taylor*
Cristina Lopez
Matt Hughes
Jennifer Larios
Sam Ellis

*Designer Network Member

The OLE! Texas Designer Training seminar took place on July 21-22 with 20 participants registered. Those who completed the workshop were eligible to earn 12 hours of LACES, become a Trained OLE Designer, and become a member of the Designer Network. The event is for designers who are willing to support early childcare and education programs in Texas.

Within this network responsibilities include:

- Following the OLE! Texas design philosophy, theoretical foundations, design development process, assessment of procedures, and research methodologies.
- Dedicating efforts to continuing education and assessing completed projects implementing research and dissemination.
- Extending OLE! trained services: coordinating and preparing workshops, preparing illustrative master plans, construction documents, permitting, construction observation, and issuing design build/construction contracting.

This issue:

OLe! TEXAS
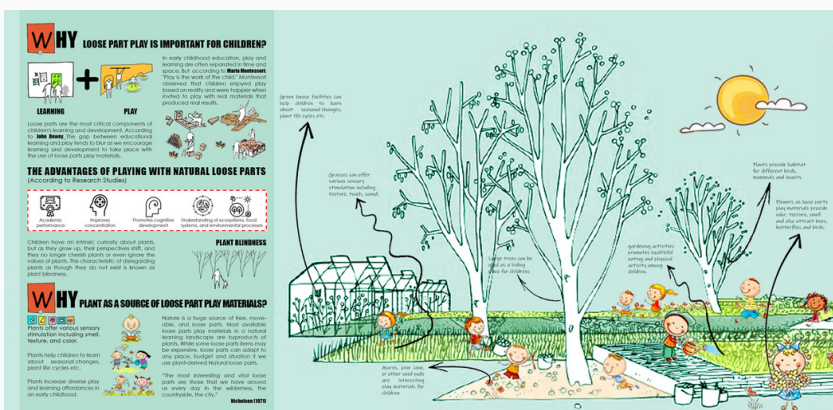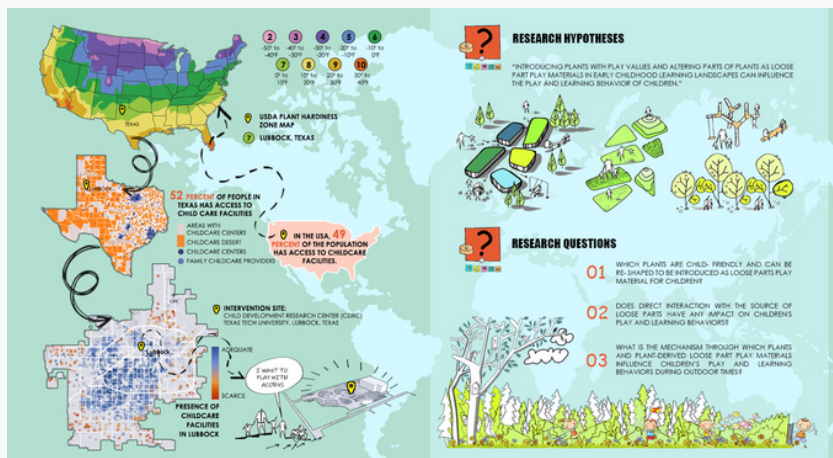### OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Nazia Afrin Trina's "The Play Value of Plants," Recognized with the Award of Excellence in Research

DESIGNED BY [NAZIA AFRIN TRINA]

Nazia Afrin Trina's research project, "The Play Value of Plants," was recognized with the Award of Excellence in Research category for student awards by the national jury for the American Society of Landscape Architects. From all entries, the jury may choose to select a single example of work they feel to be exceptional in quality and impact. This is the first time in the history of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Texas Tech University that a student has received this impressive accolade.

"...first time in the history of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Texas Tech University."

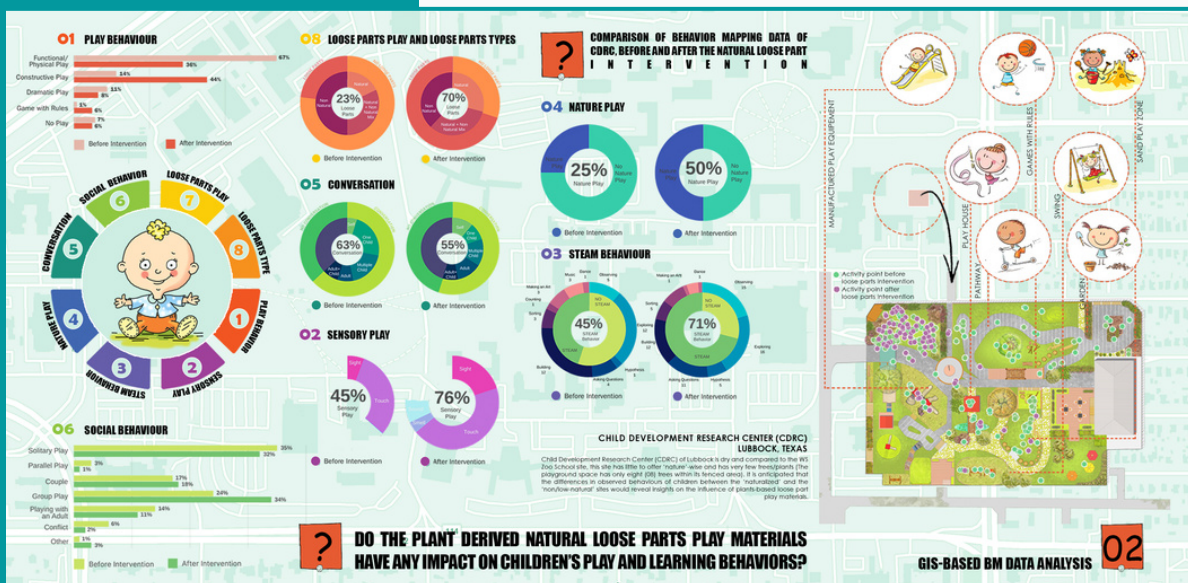JARED HORSFORD
TTU LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

"The Play Value of Plants" Introduction

Opportunities to play with loose parts play materials in early childhood are critical for play and learning behaviors associated with curiosity, imagination, exploration, experimentation, construction, and reflection. Plants are one of the leading sources of natural loose parts in outdoor learning environments. Early childhood is the time when children are eager to discover nature as they spontaneously learn from their surrounding environments, and plant-based loose parts are a great fit to meet such curiosity of young children. Although loose parts play has long been researched, child-friendly planting design to promote plant-based natural loose parts in outdoor learning environments is an under-researched area. In this four-phased research, a planting design concept has been developed, keeping loose-parts play as the primary focus of the design.
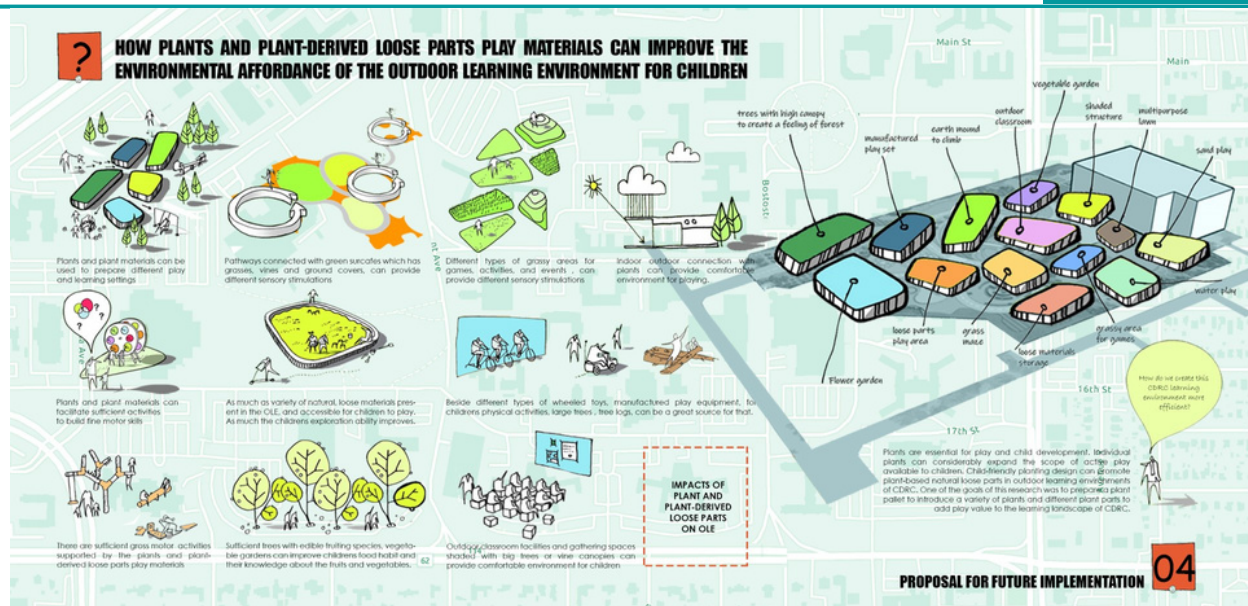
> "...plant-based loose parts are a great fit to meet curiosity of young children."
>
> NAZIA AFRIN TRINA
> TTU LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
> WINNER OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH
> (ASLA)

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

"The Play Value of Plants" Phases of Research

The first phase of the research compiled existing literature and databases on plants for play. Later, the plant resources of a nature-based preschool site were analyzed to identify plants and their associated play values to compare the plant list with existing plant databases. In the second phase, the nature-based outdoors was compared with a regular 'low-nature' outdoor environment of a different center using GIS-based behavior mapping and video data. The behavior mapping was focused on various play and learning behaviors of preschool-aged (3-5 years old) children. This part of the research aims to investigate how introducing loose parts play opportunities in a preschool outdoor learning environment influences both environmental affordances and children's learning behaviors. Results show that the nature-based environment with a higher number and diversity of plants and plant-based loose parts provides a greater number and quality of affordances in terms of play, learning, and social behaviors. Based on the data from the 1st and 2nd phases, the third phase of this research attempted to develop a 'playful' planting palette appropriate for the semi-arid climate zone of Texas. The planting palette was developed based on literature and expert opinion and aimed to maximize the amount and supply of natural plant-based loose parts on the site year-round. The fourth phase (proposed), based on the results of the first three phases, would finalize and implement the planting design in the CDRC lab site in 2023-24.

"...with a higher number and diversity of plants and plant-based loose play provides a greater number and quality of affordances..."

NAZIA AFRIN TRINA
TTU LANDSCAPE ARCH.
WINNER OF EXCELLENCE IN
RESEARCH (ASLA)

Legend

1. Fence-mounted acoustic play
2. Mini-loops around planters
3. Painted river
4. Bridge
5. City-play props
6. Existing steps
7. Proposed steps to infant area
8. Fence-mounted sensory play
9. Artifical turf for infant area
10. Covered cozy space
11. Fence-mounted art play
12. Picnic table
13. Arched tunnel
14. Sand play
15. Mud kitchen
16. Plantings
17. Playhouse 1
18. Stage
19. Fence-mounted acoustic play
20. Sensory path
21. Playhouse 2
22. Flagstone
23. Gross motor play
24. Looping curvy path
25. Teepee quiet area
26. Loose parts and natural construction
27. Colorful arch tunnel
28. Fence-mounted kinetic play
29. Painted tire vegetable planters
30. Sunflower maze
31. Alternate entrance

OLe! TEXAS
OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

MADISON SQUARE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

New OLE! Texas Project

Jared Horsford and Kristi Gaines led a design workshop for the Madison Square Presbyterian Church Childcare Center in San Antonio. The project meets best practices and incorporates unique features such as mini loops, arched tunnels, and a sunflower maze.