Building a Sandbox

Project Level: **Intermediate**

Kids and sand are a timeless combination, bringing to mind hours of simple, clean fun (well, cleaner than some things). Can you think of a better place for this rite of childhood than your own backyard? All you need is a little space, a weekend and some basic carpentry skills. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

A sandbox turns a day in the back yard into a day at the beach.

Tools

- Circular saw
- Square
- Tape measure
- Caulk gun
- Hammer/mallet
- Drill/driver with bits
- Clamps
- Shovel
- Dust mask
- Goggles
- Hearing Protection

Materials

- 8- 1x6x8' cedar boards
- 4- 1x3x8' cedar boards
- 1 Tube construction adhesive
- 1 1/4" galvanized screws
- 3" galvanized screws
- Sandpaper
- Landscape fabric
- Mason's line
- Stakes

Planning

The location of the sandbox is often determined by where you have space available. The eight-foot by eight-foot frame we're building takes up 64 sq. ft. You may be pleased to have less yard to mow, but if you can't spare the space, work with a smaller sandbox in the area that you have. The plans below can easily be re-sized to fit your space.

Sun or shade? Remember that a sandbox in full sun means the youngsters are exposed to UV rays. On the other hand, placement directly under a tree requires cutting tree roots when digging. At best this is a difficult task—it could also damage or kill the tree.

Good idea: When planning a location, remember your sandbox probably won't be a permanent fixture. When the kids outgrow it, convert the area back to lawn or a make a new flower bed.

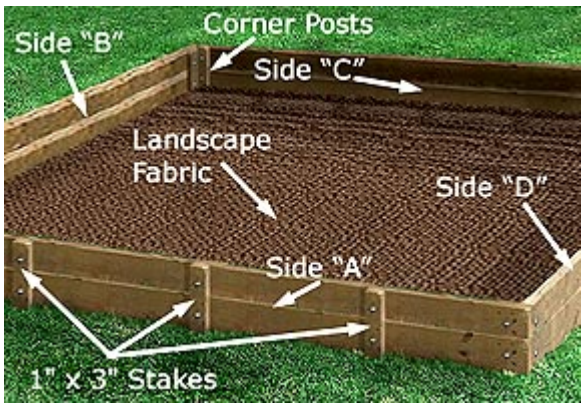
Look for a spot that receives some shade from the house or from nearby trees. For safety's sake, locate the sandbox where you can keep an eye on the youngsters while they're playing.

When planning the size, make room for dump trucks, sand buckets and the neighbors' kids. Remember that you're going to have to put sand in it—perhaps a lot of sand. The example we're using requires 32 cu. ft. of sand (about 64 fifty-LB. bags). If this sounds like too much, you can easily reduce the dimensions. The bracing and corner assembly construction will be the same regardless of the length and width.

Site Preparation

When you've decided on site and size, measure, mark and prepare the area.

1. Use twine and stakes to make straight lines.
2. Cut out the shape with a shovel.
3. Remove sod (use it to cover bare spots in your yard if you have any).
4. Dig out the soil. You'll want the bottom edge of the sandbox slightly below the surface to help keep the walls in place.
5. Level the cleared area if necessary.
6. Put down a layer of landscape fabric (not plastic) to allow drainage and prevent weeds and grass from popping up through the sand.



Parts of a sandbox.

Cut and Assemble the Pieces

To minimize cuts, we're building our sandbox from 8' lumber. Cedar is waterproof, attractive and approved for ground contact. To get the depth we need (12"), the 6" wide boards require joining.

1. Square and cut four of the 1x6 boards to 8' lengths.
2.
3. Use construction adhesive to edge glue and clamp two sets of 8' boards. Allow the adhesive to cure according to the manufacturer's instructions. The glued 8' boards are sides A and C of the sandbox.

Inside supports

4. Cut eight 10" pieces from one of the 1x3 boards. These are the inside supports.
5. Use 1 1/4" galvanized screws to secure one inside support at each end of each glued 8' board. The 10" 1x3's should be on the inside face, flush with the ends of the 8' boards as shown in the picture.
6. Square and cut four of the 1x6 boards to 7' 9"lengths.
7. Use construction adhesive to edge glue and clamp two sets of 7' 9" boards. Allow the adhesive to cure according to the manufacturer's instructions. The glued 7' 9" boards are sides B and D of the sandbox
8. Secure one inside support at each end of each glued 7' 9" board (see Step 4).
9. Cut the remaining 1x3 boards into 20" lengths. You

should have twelve 20" 1x3's.

10. Cut one end of each 20" 1x3 to a point (see diagram). The 20" 1x3's will serve as stakes for the sides of the sandbox.

11. Finish all of the pieces.

Assemble the Sandbox

When you're putting together your box, remember that tight construction prevents sand from leaking out so make sure the sandbox is square.

1.

2. Stand one of the 8' side-pieces on edge and butt the end of one of the 7' 9" pieces to the inside support on the 8' piece. Drive 3" galvanized deck screws through the 8' piece into the 7' 9" piece. Do the same on opposite end of the 8" piece. Remember to keep the inside supports facing the inside of the sandbox.

Assembled corner

3. Attach the second 8' piece to the 7' 9" piece the same way as the first and square the sandbox. Secure the two halves together to complete the box.

4. Drive three stakes into the ground along the outside of each side of the sandbox. Position the first stake centered on the side-piece Position the other two stakes two feet to the left and right of the first. Drive each stake so its top is flush with the top edge of the side-piece

5. Drive 1 1/4" galvanized screws through the stakes into the side-pieces The stakes help reinforce the sides of the sandbox and keep it square.

6. Sand lightly if needed to prevent splinters.

Sides secured by stakes

Bring in the Sand

You'll need to know the volume of the box before buying sand.

Length x Width x Height = Volume

Example: For our box, 8 x 8 x 1= 64

The volume of the sandbox is therefore 64 cubic feet. Prepackaged, bagged sand is available. Usually called play sand, it's most likely washed river sand, which is smoother and cleaner than builder's sand. A fifty-pound bag is about one half of a cubic foot, so 64 bags should fill it about halfway. Leave room in the box for toy dump trucks, buckets, shovels and the kids. You can always buy a few more bags of sand to add if needed.

Cover the Sandbox

Cats are especially fond of sandboxes. If you have cats around, it's advisable to cover the sandbox when it's not in use. Covers also keep moisture out while reducing leaves and other debris that make their way into the sand. The perfect sandbox cover is perhaps yet to be invented, but here are some options:

- **Plastic tarps** are quick, inexpensive covers, however they will blow off unless attached by snaps, bungee cords or rope. Tarps may also fill with water after a rain. Try putting a five-gallon bucket upside down in the middle of the sandbox. The peak will allow water to drain off of the tarp and keep it from sagging.

- **Lattice** is an inexpensive alternative, available in wood or plastic. While it might keep the cats out, it won't keep out water and may break if stepped on.

- **Metal** screen, hardware cloth or "chicken wire" can be attached to a wooden frame. This cover keeps debris out but won't keep out water.

- Sheets of exterior grade **plywood** can be cut to fit and laid on top of the frame. Attach the plywood to the frame with hinges if you prefer.