Providing a Barrier Between your Children and Lead Hazards

Planting the Appropriate Ground Cover

Miami-Dade County Health Department
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
8600 NW 17th Street, Suite 200
Doral, FL 33126
(305) 470-6877
Website: www.dadehealth.org

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Lead Poisoning and Soil

**What is lead poisoning?**
- Lead is a metal found in many things around us, including lead-based paint, dust, soil, water, and lead-glazed pottery
- You can eat, drink, or breathe in lead.
- When too much lead gets into your body, it is called lead poisoning
- Children are at greater risk than adults
- Lead poisoning can cause learning, hearing, and behavioral problems

**Why is soil a problem?**
- Contamination of soil has been linked to weathering of exterior leaded paint, fall-out from past use of leaded gasoline, and lead smelters.
- There is greater chance of contact with lead in the soil if there is not a good stand of grass or other ground cover.
- Any time soil is bare and exposed there is a chance that lead dust can be generated.

**How are children at risk?**
- When children play in bare areas of the yard and along the house foundation, they can come in contact with contaminated soil easily.
- Children can swallow the dust, eat the soil directly, or place in their mouths objects that have come in contact with contaminated soil.
- Lead dust can also be carried into the home on shoes, clothing, and toys.

**What are some problem areas around the home?**
- **Soil near home**  
  Lead-based paint on exterior surfaces goes through a great deal of weathering. As the paint breaks down, the lead drops to the ground and produces a region of high lead contamination.
- **Soil near street**  
  Soil near busy streets can contain large amounts of lead due to the past use of leaded gasoline.
- **Play areas**  
  Play areas can be a common source of lead because of the bare soil
- **Pet areas**  
  Frequently the soil is bare due to the constant movement of the animal

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**Prevention**

**How can I protect my children?**
- Plant shrubs near the walls of the home to prevent contact with contaminated soil
- Replace or cover the soil with uncontaminated soil, mulch, a good stand of grass, shrubs, pavement, or concrete.
- Re-sod or reseed any bare spots in the yard. A healthy stand of grass will keep the dust down.
- Do not grow vegetables and other edible plants along the edges of your home
- Leave shoes at the door before entering home.
- Wash children’s hands and toys after playing outside

**Shrubs to Consider:**

- **Aralias**  
  Size: 2-25 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Blue Porterweed**  
  Size: 12-36 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Butterfly Bush**  
  Size: 6-12 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Crepe Myrtle (dwarf)**  
  Size: 8-25 feet  
  Light: full sun
- **Croton**  
  Size: 5-10 feet  
  Light: full sun
- **Dracaena**  
  Size: 15 feet  
  Light: partial to full shade
- **Dwarf Schefflera**  
  Size: 6-15 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Jamaica Caper**  
  Size: 18 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Pittosporum**  
  Size: 10-15 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Plumbago**  
  Size: 3-10 feet  
  Light: full sun
- **Podocarpus**  
  Size: 5-40 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Saw Palmetto**  
  Size: 3-8 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Spicewood**  
  Size: 5-25 feet  
  Light: partial shade
- **Thryallis**  
  Size: 3-5 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade
- **Varnish Leaf**  
  Size: 18 feet  
  Light: full sun to partial shade