

Groundcover Comparison and Recommendations

| <i>Comparison of loose-fill ground surfacing materials</i> | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Organic Loose Material | Inorganic Loose Material |
| Material | Pine bark, shredded bark nuggets, wood chips, cocoa shell mulch | Sand, pea gravel, shredded lumber, chipped rubber |
| Advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low initial cost • Ease of installation • Less abrasive than sand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of installation • Does not promote microbial growth • Generally nonflammable (except rubber products) |
| Issues to consider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With time, these materials may decompose and lose their cushioning effect • Materials can be displaced by strong winds or the playing action of children thereby reducing cushioning effect • Susceptible to microbial growth when wet • Can get thrown around • Some children are allergic to bark dust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial cost varies (transport can be costly) • Sand and pea gravel may be displaced by the playing action of children thereby reducing the cushioning effect • Can be swallowed, blown or thrown – potentially leading to injury • Easily spreads outside the containment area • Rubber may have an unpleasant smell |

| <i>Recommended Groundcover</i> | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Type of Groundcover | Concerns/Attributes |
| Bark Mulch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls rarely result in injury • Readily absorbs shocks • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 7 feet |
| Sand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily absorbs shocks • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 5 feet |
| Chipped Rubber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily absorbs shocks • Available in lighter colors to avoid excessive heating |
| Wood Chips | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls rarely result in injury • Readily absorbs shock • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 10 feet |

| <i>Cautionary Groundcover</i> | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Type of Groundcover | Concerns/Attributes |
| Pea Gravel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid gravel with sharp edges • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 5 feet |

| <i>Not Recommended Groundcover</i> | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Type of Groundcover | Concerns/Attributes |
| Concrete/ Patio Brick | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls from short distances can result in injury • Surface does not absorb shock |
| Grass (Sod) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls from short distances can result in injury • Surface does not absorb shock |

To download from the internet, please visit <http://marshfieldclinic.org/safeplay/> or call 1-800-662-6900