

Groundcover Comparison and Recommendations

Comparison of loose-fill ground surfacing materials

	Organic Loose Material	Inorganic Loose Material
Material	Pine bark, shredded bark nuggets, wood chips, cocoa shell mulch	Sand, pea gravel, shredded/recycled 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

Recommended Groundcover

Type of Groundcover	Attributes/Concerns
Sand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily absorbs shocks • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 4 feet
Shredded/ Recycled Rubber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readily absorbs shocks • Available in lighter colors to avoid excessive heating • 6 inches compressed material will protect from falls up to 10 feet
Engineered Wood Fiber/ 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

Cautionary Groundcover

Type of Groundcover	Concerns/Attributes
Pea Gravel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered a choking hazard for infants and toddlers • Avoid gravel with sharp edges • 9 inches compressed material – will protect from falls up to 5 feet

Not Recommended

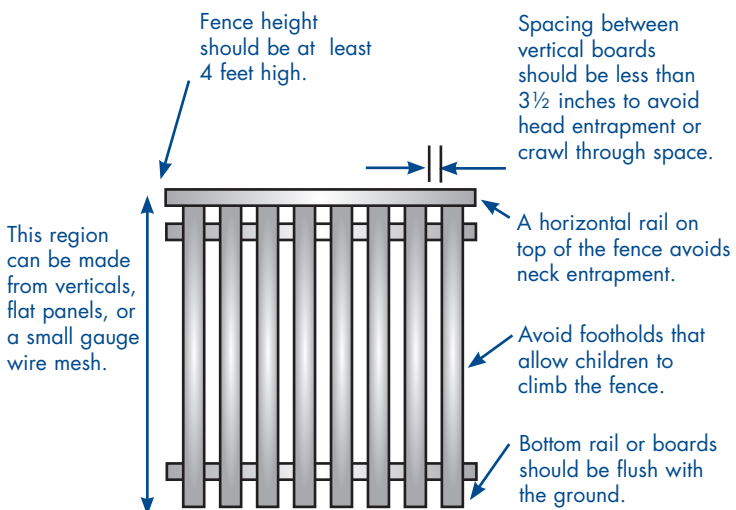
Type of Groundcover	Concerns/Attributes
Concrete/ Patio Brick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls from short distances can result in injury • Surface does not absorb shock
Grass (Sod)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls from short distances can result in injury • Surface does not absorb shock
Bark Mulch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decomposes readily • High prevalence of microbial growth when wet

This fact sheet can be downloaded and printed from: <http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/safeplay/keystocreate/>

Fencing Guidelines and Recommendations

Recommended Fencing	
Type of Fencing	Attributes/Concerns
Mesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be fitted to existing fence • Attach mesh to railing to prevent sagging • Mesh can unravel leading to ineffectiveness (reinforced vinyl borders on all 4 sides is recommended)
Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging to climb • Some models do not allow for visual supervision from outside
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging to climb • Difficult to visually supervise from the outside
Wrought Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging to climb • Space between vertical members must be less than 3½ inches • Avoid models with spikes – can cause puncture wounds
Chain Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fence offers long-lasting stability • Easy to climb (can add weaving to minimize climbing) • Cover exposed points - could cause puncture wounds

Cautionary Fencing	
Type of Fencing	Concerns/Attributes
Hedge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be thick enough to achieve boundaries • Sharp twigs – can cause puncture wounds • Requires weekly inspection for sharp twigs and holes in safe play area barrier
Galvanized Net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger grades easily climbed - can cause head injury • Sharp points – can cause puncture/ scrapes
Chicken Wire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wire uncomfortable for fingers and toes • Sharp ends – can cause puncture wounds • Requires monthly inspection for sharp edges
Plastic Snow Fence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bendable – can cause entanglement • Fence can be easily knocked down • Children can easily crawl beneath fence • Deteriorates – need for yearly replacement



Not Recommended	
Type of Fencing	Concerns/Attributes
Split-Rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily climbed – can cause head injury • Easily crawled through • Spacing of horizontal members – could cause head entrapment
Welded Wire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily climbed – can cause head injury • Bendable – can cause entanglement
Picket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily climbed – can cause head/neck injury and puncture wounds
Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily climbed – can cause head injury • Bendable - can cause entrapment

The following charts can be downloaded and printed from: <http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/safeplay/keystocreate/>