Groundcover Comparison for Play Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loose fill</th>
<th>Organic</th>
<th>Inorganic Loose Fill Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Wood chips, shredded bark nuggets, engineered wood fiber</td>
<td>Sand, pea gravel, shredded/recycled rubber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Advantages | • Low initial cost  
  • Ease of installation  
  • Less abrasive than sand | • Ease of installation  
  • Does not promote microbial growth  
  • Does not decompose  
  • Generally non-flammable |
| Issues to consider | • Materials decompose/compress over time & lose cushioning effect  
  • Susceptible to microbial growth  
  • Displaced by strong winds or playing action of children  
  • Can be thrown by children  
  • May be allergenic  
  • Often spread outside the containment area  
  • Frequent maintenance needed to ensure proper depth of materials | • May be displaced by playing children  
  • Can be thrown by children  
  • Spreads outside the containment area  
  • Pea gravel can present a choking hazard for small children  
  • May compact &/or lose cushioning ability when wet or frozen  
  • Sand and dark colored rubber may get hot/cause burns in hot climates  
  • Initial cost of shredded/recycled rubber can be high |

Unitary materials (rubber mats/tiles or poured in place)

| Advantages | • Does not displace or decompose  
  • Does not promote microbial growth  
  • Low maintenance |
| Issues to consider | • Initial cost is high  
  • Manufacturer’s directions must be followed closely, may require professional installation  
  • Dark colors may get hot/cause burns in hot climates |

Minimum Depth for Loose Fills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Protects to fall height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shredded/recycled rubber</td>
<td>6 inches</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood chips</td>
<td>9 inches</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood mulch</td>
<td>9 inches</td>
<td>7 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pea gravel</td>
<td>9 inches</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand</td>
<td>9 inches</td>
<td>4 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ground Cover Recommendations for Play Areas

**Recommended**
- Sand
- Shredded/recycled rubber
- Engineered wood fiber, wood chips
- Unitary materials

**Cautionary**
- Pea Gravel  
  • Choking hazard for small children  
  • Avoid gravel with sharp edges

**Not Recommended**
- Concrete/patio brick  
  • Does not absorb shock
- Grass or sod
- Bark mulch  
  • Microbial growth  
  • Decomposes readily