

Growth of Synthetic Lawn in Lamorinda

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Front yard with synthetic grass

Photos Cathy Tyson

Clearly they are not the only ones installing it. "Around the world demand for artificial turf is growing at 20% per annum according to a recently published study by leading industry consultants, Applied Market Information Limited," noted a report from The Association of

Synthetic Grass Installers.

For builders or homeowners seeking a LEED certification – synthetic grass can contribute to the Green Building Council's LEED points by reducing overall irrigation demand on a property.

The grass is not 100% greener on

the other side of the fence. Synthetic turf can be a heat island – hotter than regular grass. Dave Garcia of PaverPro, a full service landscape firm explains, "The shape of our grass blades is what separates us from the other guys. The blades are curved to deflect heat – coupled with a lower pile that creates less heat."

There was some concern with earlier incarnations of turf. The Consumer Product Safety Commission weighed in on synthetic athletic fields and found that new fields had no lead or generally had very low lead levels in a July 2008 report. A recent study analyzed 102 athletic fields in New York City. Lead levels for 96% of the fields were less than 100 parts per million. The acceptable EPA level for lead in soil is 400 parts per million.

Although it's completely recyclable, if a homeowner wanted to remove synthetic grass, there are a few steps involved. "If someone wanted to remove it they could contact any company that also installs turf - or a local recycling center if removed by themselves. Once removed, the remnant pieces can be made into pet pads or door mats. The recycled turf can then be re-extruded for use in any plastic product. The decom-

posed granite is also recyclable and can be mixed in with concrete to create recycled base rock or into pathway material," said Garcia.

The most significant downside is the price. It's more expensive than sod installation, but proponents argue you save money in the long run due to low maintenance expense. Depending on the volume, site access and prep needs - synthetic law can run from \$12 - \$18 per square foot.

According to Michael Parten, Certified Landscape Contractor and Store Manager at Orchard Nursery in Lafayette, natural sod professionally installed over prepared dirt costs approximately \$2 per square foot. However, for homeowners who need their existing lawn removed and replaced with new sod, plan on about \$10 per square foot – both of these options don't include sprinklers. When you add in the cost of sprinkler installation at \$1 per square foot, the difference between synthetic lawn and natural grass is reduced. Throw in savings from not paying a gardener to mow and the two options seem almost comparable.

For more information call Orchard Nursery at (925) 284-4474 or PaverPro at (888) 883-8184.



Real grass still tickles feet at Saint Mary's College



Synthetic grass has been installed at Miramonte playing fields