



Artificial grass and mulch save time and money since you don't have to mow or water. The products are safe for pets and children, and resistant to rain, snow, animal stains, salt and sunlight.

Fake turf and mulch make for easy landscaping

No need to weed, mow or fertilize Instant lawns from recycled tires

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The grass will always be greener on the other side of the fence if your neighbour has installed the latest landscaping curiosity – artificial grass.

Not only will artificial grass look perfect everyday, there's no need to mow, water, weed or fertilize again.

"Most homeowners buy our artificial lawns because they like the time-saving aspect of it," says Ivan Couto, president of Artificial Grass and Landscaping (AGL) in Stoney Creek, Ont. "Not having to mow or water saves time and money."

Artificial grass costs about \$8 per square foot installed and is rolled out in 15-foot widths. AGL has installed the product for more than 16 years in sports stadiums and venues. It developed a residential-style of turf about four years ago.

Another company, Field Turf, based in Montreal, has had such success with its sports, commercial and residential installations, it won an International Trade Canada Export Award in 2001.

AGL expects more than 100 homeowners in Ontario to install it this year and the company has already sold it in Nova Scotia, British Columbia and the U.S. (especially in places such as California, Arizona, Nevada and Las Vegas where there are strict watering bans). Buyers of new homes are particularly tempted because they don't have to spend a lot of

time or money nurturing new grass.

"To install an artificial lawn, your old lawn is removed first. After the soil is graded, a four-inch layer of fine stone screening is laid," says Couto.

The bottom layer of the turf carpet is a rubber mesh and the grass, made of two-inch high polyethylene fibres, is stitched to it.

Fine rubber granules or crumbs mix within the blades causing them to twist and turn in a natural-looking way. The mesh and rubber granules are made from recycled tires, making it an environmental-friendly option.

The turf is fastened to the ground with landscaping spikes and more granules hide the seams.

Typical installation takes two days and the ground must be soft enough to tear up the old sod. Homeowners cannot install it themselves, since it requires the skills and tools of licensed installers.

Buyers can choose a solid green blade colour or a two-toned combination, which some people think looks even more natural.

"Rainwater percolates through the mesh layer and ensures that there are no puddles. The stones act as storage for any excess water," says Couto.

Sunlight does not fade or harm the grass. The fibres have a UV protection coating and can withstand sun, heat, animal urine, wind, snow, salt and ice. The turf has an eight-year warranty. It's safe for children and pets.

To maintain the grass, an occasional brushing with a broom is recommended but not necessary. This will make the fibres stand up, as well as even out the in-fill rubber material.

Debris such as leaves and twigs can be removed with a leaf blower or rake. As long as the leaf blower nozzle is not placed too close to the turf, the rubber crumbs will stay in place when the debris is blown away.

To go with artificial grass, you can buy artificial wood chips for garden beds, available from AGL in red, brown, blue, black and beige. Each 60-pound bag (selling for \$32) will cover the four-foot round base of a typical tree to a depth of two to three inches. About four recycled tires are used per bag.

"The mulch comes with a five-year guarantee on the colour. It doesn't disintegrate and it preserves moisture around your flowers and trees longer than wood chips. It is also made of recycled tires, but the rubber properties of

The old lawn is removed and a new carpet of fake grass is installed, secured with landscaping spikes.

each chip are heavier and therefore won't blow away in strong winds," says Couto.

With both these great fakes, your landscape will be something to enjoy, without having to maintain.

► For more information and local dealers call AGL at 905-643-5000; its website www.aglgrass.com is under construction,