

How much does a natural lawn really cost?

The best lawns always start out as the most well constructed projects. Yet, regardless of how much care and attention you throw at a lawn, if it's not built to tolerate and blossom under local conditions—it won't make it and that's guaranteed.

Costs for a properly installed lawn will include site preparation, soil cultivation and amendments, trenching for irrigation, an irrigation system and drainage (pipes, fittings, controllers, valves, electric, etc.), the sod or seed, the labor to prepare the site and install the new lawn materials.

Of course renovation will include ...

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Commercial Properties—Special Considerations

Need to prepare a ROI for a large project? Here are key points to consider while doing your "needs analysis" to gather input for your proposal.

Long term benefits are weighed against short and long term expenses for most commercial projects. Whether the installation will be used for profit (outdoor restaurant) or it's just an amenity (private park area), there are basic costs to account for in each

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Compare Apples to Apples

All common costs should be considered when comparing bid amounts for installing a natural lawn to installing synthetic grasses. If you are comparing, insist on balance ... include professional services verses owner built efforts; time and effort are worth something! Value it!

- Excavation and site prep (dump/haul fees)
- Access to the area (time wasters like stairs)
- Compare natural lawn's need for soil amendments, preparation and additional materials to a synthetic lawn's base work.
- Check out specs for your areas.
- Natural lawns require additional trenching, pipes/ fittings, electric, plumbing and timer costs. Of course, this would be optional for synthetic lawns.
- Compare warranties
What natural grass can last as long as the shortest of warranties on synthetic turf?
- Long-term maintenance, repair & replacement.



"It was worth every penny just to see my wife smile when she saw her new lawn. You'd think I'd bought her a mink coat or a string of pearls."

TechNote High Lights

This Report:

Cost Analysis—[ROI](#)

Residential Lawn

Commercial Uses

Additional Considerations

[Value Proposition](#)

[CC&Rs & HOAs](#)

Water Wise

WEB Site Links and Online Resources ...

www.bewaterwise.com
www.waterwisetexas.org
www.waterwise.ca
www.coloradowaterwise.org

Suggestions for Search Engine Keywords:

water, conservation, water wise

The emissions from one hour's use of a typical lawn mower engine is the same amount as driving a car 100 miles.

How much does a lawn really cost? (con't from pg1)

... the removal of older systems, sod, roots, etc and the hauling and dumping fees to get rid of all the old materials. If you are going to do a complete cost analysis — include all the above for the “natural lawn” area.

Other “natural lawn” long term costs include:

- Equipment for maintenance
- Fertilizers, seed and other treatments
- Water and electricity to run systems
- Replacement and repairs

For busy residential and commercial property owners, using lawn care companies is quite popular. On the west coast, monthly service fees for 1000 square feet of lawn might run between \$50 to \$65 for mowing and cleanup. Other lawn care services; reseeding, aeration, fertilizing, etc., are charged separately.

What about those unknown costs? How many times will the area have to be re-sod? How often will weeds and other pests need to be treated? How will activities, traffic and animals affect the lawn and create other maintenance issues or costs? Are there local ordinances restricting use of water, chemicals or surcharges for sewer treatment? What about the totally subjective issue of “drive-by appeal”?

Water costs for maintaining a lawn in somewhat arid areas (Northern California) can range from a low of \$18 per month to over \$300 per month. The difference is based upon the communities' water costs and delivery systems.

You can find out your water costs by calling your local water company offices (refer to links on asgi.us) They may also have studies you can use to determine local use and lawn watering recommendations. Of course, any Master Gardener group can provide you information about local recommendations on lawn care, including minimums on the installation requirements for a healthy lawn.

Water studies, based upon a typical 4 person household, show that a home with 1000 SF of irrigated lawn area will use 60% of a typical summer water bill on the cost of watering the lawn. That is why, during drought, most communities will ask owners to stop watering lawns first!

Other than the intangible values of the smell of a newly mowed lawn or the thrill some do-it-yourselfers get from the hum of their electric edge-trimmers — synthetic grasses and artificial turf solve a whole bunch of issues that not only show well in a properly prepared cost analysis, they are the only solution to many of the problems encountered using “natural lawn”.

Synthetic grass and artificial turf is easily cleaned and maintained with minimal equipment, has the durability, flexibility and safety factors built in to stand up to the demands of high traffic and aggressive play and can provide a beautiful, lush green area where natural lawn products may not thrive or are impossible to grow.

That's Priceless! ●



Cost Comparison

Based Upon Costs (2003) Northern Calif. 1000 SF

Installed By & Type	10 yr Cost Per SF	Installation	Watering*	Replacement**	Lawn Care***
Professional SOD Lawn	\$14.90	\$4.50 SF	\$2400	\$2000	\$6000
Owner Installed SOD Lawn	\$11.35	\$1.95 SF	\$2400	\$1000	\$6000
Professional Synthetic Lawn	\$10.00	\$10 SF	n/a	n/a	n/a
			* metered water, \$20 per month Roseville, CA (2003)	** Re-Sod Twice \$1 per SF Prof Replaced	*** Service Co. \$50 monthly fee

Commercial Use—Special Considerations (con't from pg1)



... type of installation project. Commercial prospects tend to consider both tangible and intangible factors; form and function along with public safety and replacement costs. Most importantly, **CC&Rs** that may limit or guide the type of landscape solutions that they can use are always critical factors in decision making.

When the Tahoe City Marina and Shopping Center, (Tahoe City, CA) needed to figure out how to handle a 3500 SF area where costs to re-sod included closing the area for use, they reviewed solutions by criteria ...

- Beauty and Function
- Durability & Replacement Factors
- Ease of Maintenance & Repair
- Meets stringent environmental CC&Rs

No one factor was truly more important than the next: any one of these elements that “cost” too much or didn’t meet the project’s criteria would affect their decision to move away from using sod again.

Deciding Factors

Local CC&Rs required that porous, non-polluting materials be used. The function of the area, an outdoor restaurant serving food and beverages, is governed by health codes and needed to be publicly accessible, safe and easy to clean. As a busy tourist destination, the final look and feel plays an important role as does the factor of not having to close the area for repairs and maintenance for days at a time.

Replacing the sod was the basic objective. Competing options included concrete, pavers, asphalt, compacted aggregate or dirt.

The synthetic grass installation proposal was 15% higher than pavers, 25% higher than decorative concrete, 50% higher than sod, 75% higher than plain asphalt, 95% higher than dirt or rock coverage.

Though the highest of all the initial “costs” of installation, the synthetic grass solution won due to several factors.

Synthetic Grass provided:

- Durable beauty, less dirt & dust
- Increased comfort and days of use
- Exceeded local CC&R criteria
- Lowered maintenance, easy to clean
- Eliminated need for regular repairs
- Potential for replacement—maybe 10 years?

The installation is now 5 years old and has met or exceeded all expectations. The hard numbers alone would not have closed the deal. The management of Tahoe City Marina bought on value and got more than they anticipated. A wise investment indeed. ●

Commercial Uses — Key elements

- Beauty and function—provides the look and feel of a well-kept lawn with no hassles
- Durability factors make synthetic grass projects long-term investments
- Ease of maintenance & repair reduce recurring expenses to a minimum
- Porous and environmentally safe, synthetic grass can improve drainage and eliminate pollutants and allergens
- Increase the ability and use of the area and eliminate loss of revenue due to closure for repairs, replacement, maintenance
- Commercial leasing available to private and public business, municipalities, and schools ●



Association of Synthetic Grass Installers

Special Report : Cost Analysis—Landscape Uses

SR.01

HENRY FORD WAS HEARD TO SAY THAT THE KEY TO SUCCESS WAS PLANNING

Job Cost Considerations Should Include:

Site location — Site location and preparation requirements to achieve the project's objectives need to be considered prior to budgeting.

Area preparation — Excavation, hauling and dump fees, new trenching, additions and changes to existing landscape, drainage, irrigation, lighting, electric, gas line needs. Hauling and dump fees can add to the bottom line—know your local costs and requirements; are permits required?

Site construction — how much and what types of materials need to be brought to the site; are these elements delivered for additional cost. How and where can materials be staged for use during construction; are there restrictions or hazards for using dump boxes or excavation equipment. How close can materials be stored to the final site to keep transport to the least amount of steps?

Weather — Any chance for delays or construction issues?

Sub-Contractors Schedules — Delays can begin before a job even starts; schedule construction team's appropriately.

Contingencies:
Always have a Plan B in mind.



Glossary (check online at asgi.us for a comprehensive industry glossary)

ROI or Return On Investment: How much might one realize in either savings or profits from the investment; generally stated in numbers of years, months, weeks or days; generally based upon measurable results, in dollars and cents.

Value Proposition: Though tangible costs and profits can be included, generally, the value of an investment is often thought of in more emotional ways; peace of mind, security, durability, safety and other elements of perceived value to the investor. Determining the investors value motivation is critical to closing.

CC&R—Covenants, Codes and Restrictions: These are rules and guidelines communities have formulated and agreed to use to set local or regional standards. Generally the CC& R is accompanied by a "Design Guideline" for the development and is signed by the property owner and is enforceable by a group or committee assigned to do so in the local community or home owners association.



Association of Synthetic Grass Installers

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