

Synthetic Turf Made Easy
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Anyone that has lived along the Central Coast of California knows the challenges we face when it comes to water. In recent years, limited water has resulted in huge leaps forward in synthetic turf. The purpose of this short piece is to walk through selection, installation and care for this incredible water saving landscaping option.

The most important point I cannot emphasize enough is that synthetic turf has come a long way since its debut in the 1960's. Just in my showroom alone, we have nine different styles to choose from. Modern options include multiple colored blades and even thatch to mimic real grass. When it comes to selection you will want to consider budget, use and the lifespan you're looking for. Once you've selected your style, installation is easier than you think.

The first step for installation includes some tools you can rent, borrow or buy including:

- Vibra Plate Compactor
- Wheel Barrow, Shovels, Picks, Grading Rake, hammer
- Drop Spreader (for infill)
- Carpet Knife or Box Cutters and Carpet Scissors
- Power Broom
- Blower and/or broom (for clean up)

The next step is preparing the base where you will be installing the synthetic turf. Preparing the site properly can extend turf life and save you time and money fixing any mistakes. The first step is to remove the first 3-4 inches of existing sod and/or dirt. You will want to be sure you cap and/or remove any sprinklers. At this time, you'll want to be sure to set a rough grade for proper drainage. Next you will lay 2-2 ½ inches of drain rock and 1-1 ½ inches of either class II base rock or decomposed granite. Finally, using the vibra plate compactor, compact each layer base to approximately 90%. You will want to be sure base surface is as level and as smooth as possible. For proper drainage, make sure you've ultimately created a slight grade.

Next comes, turf installation. You will want to roll out your turf at least two hours before installation. This will allow it to acclimate and make it easier to work with. Using a razor knife, you will cut off excess turf to fit the area you have. Next you will want to fasten one end with 40 D type nails, spaced 3-4 inches apart. You will want to stretch the turf and fasten with nails as you move across to the opposite end. It is recommended that you place a nail every 12-24 inches throughout center and every 4-6 inches along perimeter. Ultimately, you can fasten together any seams using 20D or 40D nails, spaced 1-2 inches apart. Seaming tape, such as Jiffy Seal, can also be used to secure seams. You will want to apply tape lengthwise to bottom side of turf, leaving 8" stuck to turf and 3" hanging off. I always tell folks that they will want to be sure seams are tight and precise, and that the grain of your turf is all facing the same direction.

After your turf is installed, you will want to "power broom" it. This helps it to settle into place and will aid to get the blades erect. Ultimately, the last step is to apply "infill." Using a drop spreader, you will want to apply rubber and sand or acrylic sand infill onto turf as evenly as possible with a grading rake or broom until infill settles into base of the turf. You will want to "power broom" again to get the blades standing straight up.

When it comes to upkeep, you will want to broom or lightly rake your synthetic turf on a regular basis. You will likely also need to blow the turf on a regular basis as well. Most turf that we sell is guaranteed for 15 or more years. With some basic on-going maintenance, you should be able to get at least that amount of time out of it.

Now, for some tips that I tend to give everyone doing an installation:

1. Allow turf to acclimate prior to install
2. Always stretch and install turf tight
3. One yard of base material will cover 80 square feet at 4" depth (1 Yard = 1 Ton)
4. Do not overlap the seams of your turf.
5. Never drive nails into base too far – this will create a noticeable dip
6. Always power broom your turf prior to applying your infill.
7. Always run grain of turf in the same direction

As you can see, installation of synthetic turf is easier than most people realize. The product has come a long way in the last five years and independent landscape supply yards like McShane's is here to help you install successfully.

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