

## Putting around the yard

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DH - Home greens make the game short work for golfers. There's a saying among golfers: Drive for show, putt for dough.

Golfers know the "ooohs" and "aaahs" of golf tournament spectators erupt from the long, dramatic drives, not the tedious taps that sink golf balls into holes.

But it's the putting skill that earns the big bucks.

With that in mind, and with an eye toward providing family entertainment, some area landscapers and companies that specialize in putting greens have focused their attention on residential back yards.

Joe **DeShayes**, owner of **DeShayes** Dream Greens in Haddonfield, identified two groups of buyers: golfers who want to improve their game and those who install backyard putting greens for purely recreational reasons.

"The single easiest place to improve your score is on the putting green," said **DeShayes**. Synthetic materials such as nylon or polypropylene are preferable to natural grass, which requires aeration, water and chemicals to keep it green and weed-free, as well as cutting several times a week with a special "tiff-blade" mower to maintain proper height for putting. Polypropylene turf usually is installed with sand filler to help keep the fibers upright and to regulate the speed of the ball. **DeShayes**, who plays golf, said he prefers the denser nylon putting-green turf without the sand dressing because, "As soon as you start filling something with sand, it becomes a growing medium.

"We have eliminated the sand filler with the medium that we use," he said.

"The other issue is resilience of the turf," said **DeShayes**, whose company tests turf for manufacturers.

According to **DeShayes**, nylon turf displays much greater resilience - the degree at which the fibers stand up - than polypropylene. He placed the resilience of nylon turf at 312 degrees compared to 70 degrees for polypropylene.

"Most contractors - about 90 percent - use polypropylene," **DeShayes** said.

Another plus in using artificial turf, he said, is that the holes never need to be changed because the turf is much more durable than natural grass. Golf courses typically rotate holes every day because natural grass cannot tolerate constant foot traffic.

Laying a proper base is an important step in turf installation, said **DeShayes**. In a temperate climate, he suggests using paving stones over compacted aggregate as a base for polypropylene and reinforced concrete, which can be glued and nailed to nylon turf.

Cost also is a consideration, said **DeShayes**. For an average-size putting green, 15 feet by 30 feet, polypropylene turf would cost about \$5,000 compared to about \$13,500 for nylon. Add another 10 percent to cover the cost of resodding and any landscaping around the green.

**DeShayes** said polypropylene greens generally come with a two- to five-year guarantee, nylon greens usually have a seven-year guarantee.

Maintenance also differs between the types of artificial turf. **DeShayes** said the sand filler with polypropylene turf should be cleaned daily by sweeping and rolling and replaced every year.

Because the density of nylon turf helps keep out debris, it can be cleaned with a pressure washer about every seven years.

About four years ago, golfers Bruce and Lesley Bachman hired **DeShayes** to install a 15-by-30-square-foot nylon putting green in the back yard of their home in Mount Laurel. Bachman

paid about \$10,000 for the green. He also pays a "minimal maintenance fee" to groom the green each spring.

"My wife and I are both big golfers," said Bachman. The couple belong to Laurel Creek Golf Course in Moorestown.

Bachman said his family, which includes two boys, 14 and 11, uses the greens once or twice a week. "We love it," he said.

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