



# ORCHARD GLEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## SYNTHETIC TURF GUIDELINES

Synthetic (artificial) turf products have greatly improved in appearance in recent years. Many new products have an attractive and more natural look and a more realistic feel. New products have been created with a softer, more natural grass-like texture and decreased heat storage within the fibers in order to make synthetic turf an enjoyable surface to use recreationally.

The use of synthetic turf provides positive benefits such as no need for permanent irrigation or fertilizer, reduced maintenance and garden waster, and a more consistent appearance. There are a variety of synthetic turf products that accommodate different uses, from athletic fields or dog parks to front yard and individual back yard putting greens. As water scarcity continues to be an important issue in communities around California, more Associations and homeowners are turning to synthetic turf as a way to maintain a lush looking aesthetic character for active and passive open areas while cutting down on water consumption.

### **Guidelines for Synthetic Turf**

Community Associations throughout Southern California are facing increased interest from individual homeowners regarding the use of synthetic turf within private yards due to drought conditions and industry improvements in the design and appearance of synthetic turf. In response, many Communities have begun to develop guidelines to help homeowners select suitable types of synthetic turf as well as installation standards. The Homeowners Association has prepared these guidelines to ensure the Community maintain their original overall design character where natural turf areas and water consuming planting areas are converted to synthetic turf. The following are examples of guidelines that are applicable to the review and approval of applications to install synthetic turf:

### **Minimum Turf Standards:**

Guidelines for synthetic turf make a distinction between what is permitted in the front yard or visible yard areas and what is permitted in private enclosed yard areas (such as rear yards). Synthetic turf can appear too perfect, especially if used in large, unbroken areas close to the sidewalk. A few guidelines that reduce the visible impact of large synthetic turf areas are to add in planter beds with complimentary plant material and to use synthetic turf with varied blade colors. Additional turf quality standards include:

- All proposed turf materials must meet State and Federal requirements to the “Lead Compliant”. Turf products containing lead area strictly prohibited.
- Synthetic turf products must have a minimum seven (7) year manufacturer’s warranty. Warranties from distributers or installers that exceed the manufacturer’s warranty should not be a valid alternative for meeting this requirement.
- Minimum “face weight” of synthetic turf products shall be 40 ounces per square foot.

- Synthetic turf proposed in front yards or areas that are visible from the street that exceed sixty-four (64) square feet are encouraged to use a product with varied blade colors to appear more natural and realistic.
- Only synthetic turf that has a fibrous (thatch) fill material is allowed in front yard areas and areas visible from the street. Granular fill including silicon/sand is not permitted in front yard areas. Alternative fill materials may be permitted in private rear yard areas. Fill materials made from recycled tires is not permitted.
- Products with monofilament grass blades are encouraged. “Split film” or “slit film” materials are not permitted in front yard applications. (The split film products are not as durable).

### **Installation Standards for Synthetic Turf:**

The use of synthetic turf in landscape design is subjected to the same general standards that apply to traditional turf. These can include providing a planting area against houses or other vertical hardscape features in order to soften them with taller plant material. Additionally, we generally recommend that an additional 12 to 18 inch planting area be requested between proposed synthetic turf and adjacent public or common sidewalk areas. The following installation standards intended to ensure that synthetic turf installations result in the most natural appearance upon completion and a more sustainable appearance over time. Additional installation standards include:

- A porous weed abatement material should be installed below the sub-base level. This material usually consists of plastic sheeting.
- A minimum 3” layer of sub-base material shall be installed over the weed abatement material. Acceptable sub-base materials include decomposed granite or Class 2 road base. Gravel or sand sub-bases should not be used. Sub-base should be a minimum of 80% compaction rate.
- Installation should insure that the “grain” of grass blades should be in one direction throughout the proposed area of application. Turf “rolls” should be laid in the same direction and all seams shall be glued together.
- Minimum of four (4) inch (non-corrosive) galvanized nails shall be used in installations per the manufacturer’s recommendation.

### **Additional Aesthetic Guidelines**

I. Synthetic turf should not be installed directly against the house walls. A minimum 12 to 18 inch wide planting area should be provided to allow for the installation of shrubs, hedges or other suitable plant material consistent with the Guidelines.

II. Synthetic turf should not be installed directly against natural turf or lawn areas such as lawn areas in the neighboring yard. A concrete mow strip (minimum 6” wide) should be installed to prevent grass from growing and expanding into the area where synthetic turf is installed.

III. Synthetic turf areas should be contained by a mow strip, synthetic bender board material or other edging treatment consistent with the Guidelines in order to minimize the exposed edge of the synthetic turf and to contain the fill material used to support the turf (if applicable). Rolled or tucked edges are strongly discouraged in general, and in front yard areas, are prohibited.

IV. Synthetic turf areas in front yards shall be set back a minimum of 12 to 18 inches from the sidewalk and separated by the planting area. Synthetic turf is not permitted to abut the sidewalk, landscaped common areas or areas maintained by the Association.

The interest in the use of synthetic turf as a continuing trend. When the current drought subsides, it is not likely that homeowner's will remove synthetic turf and replant real grass. It is more likely that synthetic turf will be replaced with new synthetic turf when it is worn or otherwise needs replacement. New California laws now add more support for communities and homeowners in their efforts to use less water in landscape applications.

One misconception regarding synthetic turf is that it is maintenance free. Although it does not need mowing or edging weekly, synthetic turf does require regular maintenance, especially areas that are accessible to pets. Synthetic turf eliminates the need for fertilizers and pesticides (synthetic turf does not attract insects) but it still needs to be washed off regularly. Some manufacturers recommend monthly washing and occasional disinfecting treatments.

Natural turf filters water runoff but proponents of synthetic turf note that water runoff from synthetic turf area do not contain chemicals generally found in fertilizers and pest control sprays used on real grass. In fall, leaves need to be raked or blown from both natural and synthetic turf areas. However, synthetic turf should also be raked or swept periodically to lift flattened areas and/or untangle matted blades and restore the natural appearance. Finally, homeowners weighing the overall installation and maintenance cost of synthetic turf should consider the cost of replacement after 8-15 years vs. the cost of reseeding or re-sodding natural grass lawn areas. While the final answer to the natural turf vs. synthetic turf debate may not be in yet, it is easy to see how the opportunity to choose the appropriate material for their use and purpose can be an attractive benefit to homeowners considering ways to reduce water and weekly landscape maintenance and associated costs.

The many features and design decisions that the new artificial turfs present make artificial turf Guidelines an essential tool for Associations and homeowners in planned communities who are contemplating landscape design improvements.

Adopted by the Board of Directors

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