FYN Garden Q & A Series

Thomas Becker
Extension Agent, Florida Yards & Neighborhoods

FYN Topic:  Artificial Turf

Question:  My neighbor wants to replace his yard with artificial turf. What are some reasons I can give him to advice against it?
—Dolores from a community in Ft Myers

Answer:  Synthetic or artificial turf (AT) no longer has the appearance of Astro turf. AT products are now sold and marketed to athletic field and park managers, landscapers and gardeners. 90% of AT products now sold are 'made in the USA' in carpet factories in Georgia. However, AT is not considered to be a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ product. No plant roots are present to filter and clean rain water of excess nutrients. And, no natural, healthy grass is present to attract wildlife. AT does not cut down on glare and noise like real turf. And, most important of all cannot absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen to our environment.  AT has also been found to have a substantially higher surface temperature than a natural lawn. When new, the rubber granules often contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) at levels above health-based soil standards. However, the level of PAHs generally decline as the AT ages. Also, in some cases, heavy metal contents of AT exceed limits for natural soil. Higher then normal zinc content may be a concern while lead concentrations appear to stay well below EPA standards.

Useful Links
http://www.floridayards.org
http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/
http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M 04/21/2012.