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Turf vs. Concrete

By Bob Costa

Several months ago, I was in my car listening to a garden talk show. The guest, who happens to be an advocate of native landscapes, made the statement that turf has as much value as concrete in the landscape. Instantly, I felt my grip tightening on the steering wheel, and I felt a sudden urge to pick up the phone and openly challenge these remarks. Soon logic took control, and I realized that I was scheduled to appear on the talk show in a few weeks. . . . before long I would have an opportunity to set the record straight.

It became clear to me that either this individual moon-

lighted as a concrete contractor and was looking boost business, or she was rather naïve about the values of turf in the landscape. If I had picked up the phone, these are some of the comments I would have made:

"Hello, I just heard the remark you made about turf and concrete having the same value in the landscape. I was wondering, have you ever been to a park, maybe throwing the frisbee and had to dive a little to your left? What would you rather land on? Tall fescue or exposed aggregate? Oh, I see."

How about, your children just got home from school, you're busy so you send them into the backyard to play on the concrete. Wouldn't you prefer Kentucky bluegrass? I

thought so.

Maybe it's a warm summer day and you're feeling a little lazy. Wouldn't it be nice to curl up under a tree and take a nap on a hot patch of concrete? Ouch!

Or perhaps you just bought your dream house in the hills. What a view! Before you know it, it's December and the first big storm of the season hits. Isn't it comforting to know that the hillside above your house is covered with concrete?

Same house, same hillside, another beautiful morning. How wonderful it would be to grab a fresh cup of coffee, sit outside in your favorite chair and stare at the beautiful exposed aggregate and expansion joints. Your mate leans over and whispers in

your ear, "Isn't it amazing what they can do with concrete these days?"

Ever wash the dishes, glance out the window and see a bird digging for worms in your concrete? Skinny bird, huh?

Remember when you were younger, that picnic at the park with your first love. Wasn't it fun to neck on the concrete? Elbows were a little cut up but, oh well, that's love.

Yes, I know you argue, concrete doesn't require water, or an occasional application of fertilizer, and you're right, it never has to be mowed. But still it seems to me the choice is rather simple, unless you're in the concrete business.



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