

If you're interested in rapid germinating Kentucky bluegrasses, you may want to check out the NTEP website and look at the turfgrass establishment data taken for the 2005 NTEP Kentucky bluegrass test (Fall 2005 - maybe lumped into the 2006 data). There are some interesting differences. The NTEP trials, regardless of location, are almost always seeded in late summer/early fall. - bsp

**Q:** The facts behind our situation are as follows: 1) Our high school behind the street we reside on is attempting to raise funds to install an artificial turf athletic field, replacing the existing natural grass field; 2) Since they would never pay for this with taxpayer dollars, there is a fundraising effort to purchase this field; 3) The people on our street are opposed to this because of the significant noise and traffic it might cause. We raised **environmental concerns** such as compounds in the crumb rubber cushioning - but not sure if these would be taken seriously; and 4) It seems the one issue might be **"maintenance costs"**.

Would you have an opinion on whether costs to maintain an artificial turf athletic field are significantly less than a natural turf field? Any information or articles related to the above concerns would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

**A:** You are not alone. I have received this type of inquiry numerous times. As for maintenance costs, these infill

synthetic fields can be maintained with minimal inputs; HOWEVER, under that approach the conditions on the field will deteriorate much faster and become increasingly compacted (hard), debris will eventually clutter the field, and unrepaired seam failures would become a safety hazard. So in reality, there are significant synthetic field maintenance costs.

Manufacturer's maintenance manuals for synthetic fields call for brushing and grooming to loosen compacted infill; cleaning equipment (needs to be purchased) and/or crews are needed to pick up debris; and staff/contractors are needed to repair worn out areas, failed seams, etc. Some municipalities and schools are concerned with bacterial infections and will pay to have the field periodically sanitized to limit their liability to potential serious infections (although some people believe this is unnecessary). These costs will certainly be in the thousands of dollars per year and can total into the tens of thousands per year when the fields are intensively used and managed, especially if this work is done via service contractors.

**Ultimately, the most important "maintenance" cost** for a community is the tear out and replacement costs for synthetic fields - these fields do not last forever. Albeit unusual, I know of a field that was replaced 6 years after the initial installation. Most companies will not stand behind a synthetic field (guarantee it) for more than 8 years.

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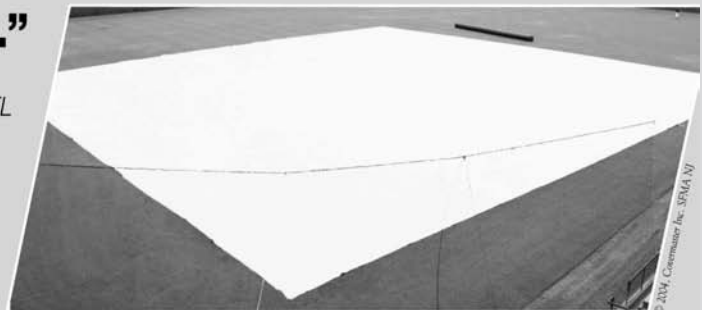
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# Question & Answer

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Each situation will be somewhat different but based on actual replacement cases (in 2008 dollars), the costs for tear out and disposal of the old carpet and replacement **has ranged from \$400,000 to \$450,000**. Obviously, this value will change over time with inflation but simple math suggests a community will need to average raising many tens of thousand of dollars per year (in addition to the "normal" maintenance cost of grooming, brushing, cleaning, repair, etc.) to be capable of replacing a worn-out field.

If the idea of "recycling" a synthetic field is thrown out to make people "feel good" about the project, you need to ask two things: How much does it cost to recycle a synthetic? ... and ... Where is there a LOCAL recycling facility that will recycle the synthetic field product? I expect that you will not get a specific answer to either of these questions.

Below are some URLs to resources that more thoroughly discuss these ideas on synthetic sports fields. I hope you find this useful. **A Guide to Synthetic and Natural Turfgrass for Sports Fields** (STMA document) [http://www.stma.org/\\_files/\\_items/stma-mr-tab1-2172/docs/2nd%20edition.pdf](http://www.stma.org/_files/_items/stma-mr-tab1-2172/docs/2nd%20edition.pdf)

**Replacing a Synthetic Turf Field - One Manager's Experience** (SportsTurf Magazine article: January 2010) <http://digitalmagazinetechology.com/a/?KEY=sportsturf-10-01january#page=11>

**Two Manufacturers' Opinions on Maintaining Synthetic Turf** (SportsTurf Magazine article: February 2010) <http://digitalmagazinetechology.com/a/?KEY=sportsturf-10-02february#page=37&zoom=0-jam>

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