



Can you compare a putting green to your backyard? The similarities may surprise you.

HOME LAWN OR PUTTING GREEN... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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You wouldn't think that putting greens and home lawns have much in common besides being grass surfaces, but the similarities may come as a surprise.

Both require adequate sunlight for optimal plant health and, in particular, the ability to recover from heavy traffic. The heavily shaded areas of a putting green will always be thinner and weaker compared to the turf in full sun. As a result, wear from golfer traffic or maintenance equipment is always noticed first where shade is a problem. Similarly, little backyard turf grows beneath the dense shade of a tall tree, so don't expect any turf recovery if you build a swing set for the kids in the shade.

Putting greens and lawns both need timely applications of water to maintain turf health and a steady rate of growth during droughty weather. Most putting greens can receive water from sprinklers or hoses. Some lawns have irrigation systems, though most rely solely on rainfall or a small garden hose to keep turf alive

during dry weather. Lack of water can cause severe stress or death to turf on putting greens and lawns, though lawn turf has the advantage of becoming dormant during a drought and will typically recover after rain if it is not overly stressed by traffic.

Too much water can be equally detrimental as the lack of water for putting greens and lawns. Waterlogged soil conditions are detrimental to root growth and increase the potential for disease, winter injury and heat stress. This is why the best putting greens are built from sand-based construction materials, so they can drain rapidly and resist compaction.

Putting greens and lawns require frequent mowing to maintain a consistent surface. Regular mowing encourages a dense stand of fine-bladed turf and a steady rate of growth, which is necessary for rapid recovery from wear caused by foot traffic and other stress. However, the daily mowing needed to produce a dense, smooth putting green requires far more effort than mowing a lawn once a week. Then again, the average home lawn won't need to provide 100 to 200 discerning golfers with a nearly flawless putting surface every day during peak months of play.

No doubt the cost of a high-tech reel mower for putting greens is far greater than a basic rotary mower for home lawns. Yet, both require sharp, properly adjusted blades to achieve a high-quality surface.

Excess thatch accumulation can lead to various turf problems for home lawns and putting greens. Aeration, verticutting and sand topdressing are practices typically employed to manage thatch on putting greens. Smaller-scale aerators and other tools like power rake blades are used to remove thatch from lawns. The amount of cleanup that is necessary following such practices varies widely depending on the surface. Aeration plugs are usually removed from putting greens, while soil plugs from a home lawn disappear after a mowing or two.

Once you look beyond the obvious fact that a typical home lawn is mowed at a height thirty times greater than a manicured putting green, you will find a surprising number of similarities in their maintenance and management requirements. Of course, the intensity and cost of these practices is at a much higher level when it comes to a putting green. However, you can play frisbee with your dog on a putting green – and get banned from the course – but you will never sink a 40-foot putt on your home lawn.