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Synthetic Turf and Bare Feet

We've been reading in a number of places how man is demonstrating his capacity for improving on nature by scientifically developing substitutions. One of the latest innovations appears to be synthetic turf.

Naturally, we had more than just a passing interest in such materials that simulate the appearance of grass but claim to lack its "flaws," so we sent for some samples.

After examining the little swatches mailed to us, we've come to the conclusion turfmen have nothing to worry about. As my outdoor-loving wife said, "Who'd ever want to walk around in their bare feet on that!"

Granted, the new lawnlike carpeting may enable designers to put the green stuff (although it comes in a number of colors!) into places where turfgrass wouldn't grow anyway, such installations cannot be used in places where man has come to expect the sweet scents of clipped lawn and pungent wet earth, and the miracle of green growing things in their annual cycle of birth and rebirth.

We wondered about a number of angles. No company sent us prices on their turf carpeting, even though we had asked for them. Surely these synthetic ground covers need care, but it is claimed their advantages include mildew, moth, weed, rot, dirt, stain, flame, and stretch *resistance*. Wonder how one keeps them clean, or where the detergent wash water goes when it drains?

Are these grass substitutes strong enough to withstand duffers on a golf green or constant footwear, especially from cleated shoes? It was easy to pull out "tufts of grass" on one of the samples we received, and no matter how hard our yardman tried, he couldn't replace it with a sprig of grass or a planting of seed. How do these easy-to-keep plastic grasses reflect the hot summer sun? Would they feel like the seat of your convertible when its parked with the top down?

Mind you, we're not against progress, and undoubtedly today's entries into the synthetic grass market will improve both in feel and durability, but we're confident manmade turf will have to come a long way before there's even the slightest threat to the future of cultivated sod and those who maintain grass so man can enjoy the greenness of life itself when he steps away from the synthetic tools of his business environment, to relax in nature's great out of doors, to stretch out on the lawn beneath his favorite tree, or experience the refreshing thrill of walking on a dew-covered grass in his bare feet.

Ever see plastic fruit? Looks tempting, but 'tis not very nourishing nor satisfying to the taste.

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.

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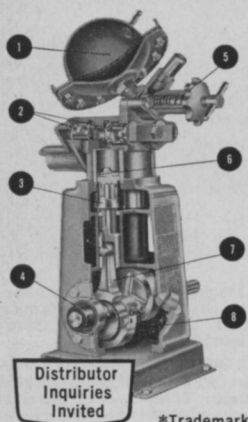
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