



Sick of watering, mowing, weeding and feeding? The latest generation of 'replicated grass' looks better than the real thing. And the kids love it

# Turf's up

BY SHEREE-LEE OLSON

**J**erome Keays is in the business of installing synthetic putting greens. But the backyard he's most excited about has never seen a golf ball.

The yard belongs to Oakville, Ont., consultant Rienk DeVries and his wife, Vicky, and it is enough to make any homeowner green. At a time when patchy, muddy yellow turf is the norm, the Derives' lawn is lush, soft and emerald-coloured.

"We've got the in-laws over from England right now, and they couldn't believe it," Rienk DeVries says in a telephone interview. Yes, it's fake. But it's a superior sort of fake.

Says Keays, "We like to think our stuff is better than grass."

Produced by U.S.-based ProGreen, the "replicated grass" installed by Keays's company, BGS of Pickering, Ont., is a very different product than the sort of turf used on sports fields.

I used to play soccer," DeVries says. "You can get rug burn." ProGreen's Kentucky Landscape Grass, developed last year, is made of finer stuff: polyethylene fibres that are soft to the touch. Installed over a two-inch bed of sand, it's further cushioned with an infill of recycled rubber crumbs that are added by "topdressing." The rubber crumbs are fixed with weather resistant glue, and the whole thing is stapled into place with giant lawn staples.

The result is rake-able, weather-resistant and virtually maintenance-free. Perforations let the rain through and allow for seasonal hosing-down. In the DeVries case, the faux grass also made a fine base for an ice rink during the winter. When it came time to drain the rink, he and his kids were able to play soccer on the grass the same day. Most important, it's easy on their knees. "It's great," DeVries says. "They can ride their bicycles on it and kick the ball on it and dive into it and stay clean." DeVries

initially turned to the product out of sheer frustration. With sandy soil and mature trees that sucked up water, "it was just impossible to keep a lawn." And his environmentalist principles made him unwilling to rely on pesticides or elaborate watering systems.

Indeed, with a flood of municipalities focusing on water conservation and metering, not to mention the growing intolerance for urban pesticide use, Keays sees potential for a whole new customer base. "There's a much larger market for this product among non-golfers than golfers," he says.

Although DeVries's wife was initially skeptical, she is now a convert. The reason is simple. Mud.

•"The kids used to track it in like crazy," DeVries says. Now there's none. That's what sold my wife."

*Pro Green Kentucky Landscape Grass is available through BGS for \$6.50-\$9 a square foot (installed). For information, call 905-649-3663 or 1-866-PGA-PUTT, or go to [www.pro-greens.com](http://www.pro-greens.com).*