

## **ABCs of Lawn and Turf Benefits**

### **Healthy turf means healthy lives**

Frequently, those little green factories at our feet are taken for granted. It's easy to overlook the many reasons why a healthy lawn or a dense athletic turf is an essential part of our lives. This primer from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) explains why the benefits of turf are as simple as A, B, C.

**Aesthetically pleasing** — The value of turfed areas have been recognized for their beauty since China's emperors maintained mowed-grass areas (157-87 BC). Today, lawns are an integral part of home landscaping and public parks.

**Business improvement** — Businesses and manufacturing complexes that have well-maintained grassy areas create a favorable impression to the general public, employees, and customers. Lawns increase the value of the property by up to 15 percent.

**Climate control** — Turfgrasses appreciably cool temperatures, thus working as exterior "air conditioners."

**Dust filter** — Dust and smoke particles from the atmosphere are trapped by turf, keeping our air cleaner and fresher.

**Erosion control** — Grasses greatly control erosion by intercepting both raindrops before they disturb the soil and slow-flowing water so that larger soil particles are captured from the collected water.

**Fire retardation** — Buffer areas of well-maintained grassy lawns around buildings are good insurance against fire.

**Golf courses** — Millions of people play golf for exercise, relaxation, and business transactions. In the U.S., more than 14 million golfers enjoy the highly groomed grass found on golf courses.

**Health promoter** — Turfgrasses cushion, clean air, generate oxygen, and create serene, beautiful landscapes.

**Injury reducer** — A soft, resilient turfgrass surface buffers and absorbs some of the impact from injuries due to sports and games.

**Junk prevention** — Garbage is less likely to be thrown on an area where there is a well-maintained lawn.

**Knowledge base** — The care of turfgrasses and other plants is considered so therapeutic it is used in a variety of rehabilitation programs, including those for the ill, elderly, handicapped, and the incarcerated.

**Landscape of America** — Lawns are estimated to occupy an area of between 25 million to 30 million acres in the U.S. (equivalent to the size of the five New England states) and is increasing along with the population.

**Market value** — Monetary value is associated with a well-manicured lawn. As a result sales prices of homes may increase up to 20 percent.

**Noise reducer** — Grassy areas reduce excessive sound, something especially appreciated in urban areas. Grassy slopes beside lowered expressways decrease noise 8–10 decibels.

**Oxygen factory** — The oxygen generated by turf grasses has a major impact on making our environment habitable. A 50-foot by 50-foot lawn produces enough oxygen for a family of four to breathe for one year.

**Pollutant blocker** — Turfgrasses absorb such pollutants as carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide, which renders the air unfit to breathe. Turfgrass thatch also acts as a barrier that deters chemicals from entering the soil profile.

**Quiet inducing** — Grassy areas, whether as aspects of parks, golf courses, memorials, or homes, affect mood and create feelings of serenity, thoughtfulness, happiness, or sadness, depending on our personal associations.

**Runoff control** — A highly maintained lawn greatly reduces runoff of water and pollutants. Dense turfgrass cleans the water, which helps maintain a high-quality environment.

**Safety net** — Grassy playing surfaces are safer than dirt, Astroturf, or concrete because they provide sure footing and cushioning sod that adds to the quality of sports.

**Traffic cop** — Lawn barriers attractively and clearly direct both vehicular and pedestrian traffic in areas of heavy movement, whether on campuses, roads, or neighborhoods.

**Urban relief** — Urban area lawns offer a little taste of the countryside, providing a much-needed link with nature and reducing stress.

**Vitalizer** — Young and old alike enjoy games and come alive on grassy areas. No other surface material feels as soothing on bare feet or is as good for playing games and even turning somersaults.

**Water filter** — A dense turf enhances groundwater in two ways. First, turfgrasses increase water infiltration. They also clean the water as it passes through the grass so that underground water supplies are replenished for our use.

**Xeriscaping environments** — Creating beauty in low-water areas is gaining popularity in appropriate regions. Ornamental grasses and small grassy areas are key parts of this practice.

**Yearly sign** — The cycle of the seasons produce changes in the color of lawns. Most turf becomes a duller green or even brown in the winter months, but is among the first areas to green up in the spring. This spring greening lifts the human spirit like little else, and is an event to look forward to.

**Zoned improvement** — Areas that are stabilized by turfgrasses enhance safety on roads and airfields by reducing flooding, mud, and visibility — impairing dust.

This information is brought to you by your local green industry professional and the Professional Landcare Network.

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