

# ARTIFICIAL TURF SERVES SAFETY, ENVIRONMENT

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*By Dan Sherrier • May 16, 2011*

The preschool children at the Ashland-area Goddard School have been playing on an artificial surface that promotes both safety and environmental conservation.

The school owners had XGrassPlay installed on a portion of a playground last spring, and it's been facilitating the children's playtime since.

The school serves children 6 weeks to 12 years, and it has three playground areas for different age groups. The playground with the synthetic grass is intended for ages 2 and a half to 5.

The turf gives off no chemicals or allergens and collects no bacteria. Several inches beneath the artificial grass is a layer of padding that helps protect children from falls, and the padding is made from recyclable materials. When it rains, the water drains through the surface, and it dries rapidly.

It requires no maintenance, which spares lawnmower exhaust, water and fertilizer. The children's play results in no bare spots, which means no mud after a rain shower.

A benefit is that the children can play outside on a dry surface even if it just rained the night before. "They get to play more outside, which is a big advantage, because we don't have to worry about it being wet," owner Alice Rother said.

It makes the children's summer "water days" more enjoyable. Once a week during the warm weather, they get to play with a sprinkler, but mud is no longer an inhibiting factor.

The area of the XGrassPlay is bounded between two rubberized surfaces on a portion of the schoolyard. Playground equipment stands on one of those surfaces, and the outer border is a bike trail on which the kids can ride plastic toy cars. Normal grass remains on the far side of the trail.

"We're selective in what kind of toys children can use outside. They have to be age-appropriate and safe. So we do have some little cars they use, so this kind of gave them a bike trail in the backyard that they could drive around, and then we figured we'd fill it with the turf," Rother explained.

"We did this because we had the barren spots, and we wanted our children to be able to go out and play regardless of what the weather did."

Turf construction took about a week, and the children enjoyed watching the process unfold, Rother said. A year later, it looks just as fresh.

"It's really held up well," she said. "It is just beautiful stuff, too."

