Artificial Turf: Natural Grass Benefits

Safe Healthy Playing Fields Coalition Fact Sheet

The Safe Healthy Playing Fields Coalition (SHPFC) website (www.safehealthyplayingfields.org) presents viable natural turf alternatives to synthetic turf, which places toxins and carcinogens in the bodies of our children and streams of our watershed. Know the risks to your health and the environment BEFORE these carpets are installed because backtracking is costly. Information to be aware of (and sourced on the SHPFC website, unless otherwise noted) includes the following:

Environmental facts:

- Grass is a natural filtration system; it filters rain as it runs into streams and waterways.
- Grass absorbs carbon dioxide, produces a cooling effect, and filters rain and storm water.

Must read: Growing Green Grass: Innovative discussions and solutions for managing high quality turfgrass (aka natural grass) blog by Jerrod Minnick who directs grounds and environment at the Maryland SoccerPlex & maintains both natural and synthetic turf fields. http://growinggreengrass.net/

Jerrod Minnick explains that a correctly built sand-based field does well in the rain. "Following Hurricane Irene and a Tropical Depression that brought over 13 inches to DC in 4 days, the University of Maryland moved a rainy day match to SoccerPlex. The grass field at Maryland was unplayable but the grass field at SoccerPlex Stadium was ready for play." ("Field of the Year," SportsTurf, October 2012, p.39 http://read.dmtmag.com/i/86038/8)

Techniques and technology for high-quality, frequent use, low environmental impact grass fields is evolving and improving:

The high quality warm-season fields are used about 900 to 950 hours per year, and the cool-season fields support 700 to 750 hours of play. (The County's AT report said max 400-600 hours). "We prove everyday that the grass field will take more traffic than we ever thought. The more we evolve our ways, the more a grass field will be able to take," Minnick says. ("Field Care: New Ideas on Fall Renovations," Sports Field Management, October 2012 http://www.sportsfieldmanagementmagazine.com/article-8665.aspx)

Minnick also authored an article explaining that "going 'green' is not a complex issue. It is a basic issue of conservation," eliminating unnecessary pesticide and fertilizer use and timing watering properly to conserve. He also reports that lawnmower technology is improving – hybrid mowers use up to 40% less diesel fuel and are comparable in cost to conventional mowers. (Source: "Environmental Stewardship & your maintenance plan: Set an Example" by Jerad Minnick, Sports Turf, August 2012, p. 8-13 http://read.dmtmag.com/i/77829/8)

OTHER EXPERTS:
A good link not just for Kevin Trotta's work but links to other natural field information as well www.EnvironmentalTurfCraft.com. Kevin Trotta BS, MA is an Eco-Friendly Turfgrass / Sports Field Specialist, Consultant, Advocate, Speaker proponent of natural green grass, naturally (pesticide free).