

Effectively Installing Synthetic Turf Outdoors



When installing synthetic turf outdoors, it is important to select an adhesive that features easy handling and long-term durability. Installing synthetic turf outdoors is a different world than indoor installation. Experienced and successful indoor installers can have disastrous results outdoors using their usual techniques or adhesives.

What's more, variable outdoor weather conditions can affect installation time, labor expense, appearance and profits. For these reasons and more, selecting the proper outdoor adhesive is critical.

Q: How will I know if an adhesive has long-term exterior durability?

A: Beware of impressive indoor laboratory test results. Some adhesives deteriorate and become installation "time bombs" as they weather. Instead, go with an adhesive that has proven years of good outdoor weathering properties.

Q: How can we avoid losing productive installation hours or even days, due to the weather?

A: "Time is money," and that means you can't always wait for ideal weather. That means you should avoid "fair weather" adhesives that solidify or become too thick to spread when cold, those that are sensitive to unexpected rain immediately after installation, and those that "snap cure" too fast when it's hot.

What's needed in variable or hostile weather is a wide working window. This can be achieved by using a "high green strength" (high grab) adhesive.

Q: What is the "high green strength" adhesive, and how does that help?

A: Green strength is the adhesive property that holds two surfaces together when first contacted and before (still green) the adhesive develops its ultimate bonding properties when fully cured. It's the opposite of being "oily" and slippery. A high green strength is vital to help prevent turf movement due to the troublesome forces of wind lift, edge curl, creep, wrinkling, buoyancy from unexpected rain, expansion and/or contraction due to surface temperature changes from sunlight, shadows, passing clouds and so on.

Q: Do paste adhesives have an inherently high green strength?

A: No, almost the opposite regarding tack and grab. They are slippery. That's why grease, caulks, sealants, toothpaste and most paste adhesives can be easily squeezed from tubes.

Q: What about glued vs. sewn synthetic turf seams?

A: An assembly is less likely to break or become distorted if stress is distributed evenly over a large area instead of concentrating it unequally in localized areas. Thread for sewing is a mechanical fastener that concentrates stress at fastening points while leaving unbonded spaces between each stitch. Conversely, glued seams spread stress over a large bonding area instead of concentrating it at stitching points.

Q: What about spot gluing, strip gluing or perimeter gluing, instead of a total glue-down of the surface?

A: Partial gluing is definitely not as good as total glue-down, plus in many cases it can be worse than if not bonded at all. It's done in an attempt to save money but can

actually cost more. Because the unbonded parts cannot expand sideways when they get hot from the sun, they expand upward to form a bubble or wrinkle. Sudden stops, turns and twisting from athletic activities can cause the loose parts to bunch up underfoot. Plus, with rain or the angle of the sunlight, the surface "telegraphs" the parts that are bonded and not bonded.

Q: There are so many adhesives on the market, and we are not equipped to test them. What is the best outdoor adhesive to use?

A: Proven long-term exterior durability is essential. However, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all adhesive. Spray, trowel, squeegee, "glue box," as well as the turfs backing and subsurface are important to selecting the adhesive. One-part curing urethanes are preferred, but within that general class some are good and others are questionable. The best option is to ask the surface manufacturer and adhesive manufacturer for help making your selection.

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