

# Artificial Grass in Toronto: 2026 Cost & ROI Report

Installation pricing, ten-year ownership costs, water-rate impacts and payback analysis for Toronto homeowners

|             |                                                                               |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| REPORT      | RR-2026-TTP-01 · August 2026                                                  |
| COVERAGE    | City of Toronto, Greater Toronto Area, Ontario                                |
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Toronto Turf Pros Research publishes data-driven local studies on residential landscaping, water use and outdoor surfaces in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. This report is provided free for information purposes.

## ABSTRACT

This report compiles published 2026 pricing for residential artificial-grass installation in Toronto and models the ten-year cost of owning a synthetic lawn against natural grass on a typical Toronto property. All inputs are drawn from published sources — Toronto installer price guides, Toronto Water's 2026 rate schedule, and Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals — with every modelling assumption stated where it is used.

We find that a mid-range artificial lawn for a typical 500 sq ft Toronto backyard costs **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed**, that irrigating the same area as natural grass uses roughly **27.9 m<sup>3</sup> of water per season (about \$136 at Toronto's 2026 combined rate of \$4.8629/m<sup>3</sup>)**, and that the investment breaks even in approximately **five years against professionally serviced lawn care** — but does not repay in cash terms against do-it-yourself care, where the trade-off is the owner's time.

## KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

**\$10–25**

per sq ft, installed price  
range published for the  
GTA in 2026

**27.9 m<sup>3</sup>**

seasonal irrigation for a  
500 sq ft lawn (24-week  
model)

**\$136/yr**

water cost of that irrigation  
at Toronto's 2026  
combined rate

**≈5 yrs**

break-even vs  
professionally serviced  
lawn care (500 sq ft)

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## 1 The Toronto market and the 2026 pricing basis

Toronto is Canada's largest city, with 2,794,356 residents and 1,160,892 occupied private dwellings recorded in the 2021 Census; only 23.3% of its housing stock is single-detached, while 30% is semis and townhouses and 46.7% is apartments [1]. The residential turf market is concentrated in the ground-oriented half of that stock — downtown semis on lots as narrow as 13–25 ft wide by 66–125 ft deep, and the active teardown belt of postwar bungalows on 40–60 ft frontages across North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough [2].

Three published price references frame this report's 2026 cost basis (Table 1). They converge on a working range: **most Toronto residential projects price between \$10 and \$25 per sq ft installed**, with the middle of the market at \$13–\$18.

Table 1 — Published 2026 installed-price references for the Toronto market. Sources: [3][4][5].

| Reference                                   | Basis                        | Published figure                       |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Design Turf (Toronto installer)             | fully installed, residential | \$12–22 per sq ft                      |
| Southwest Greens Ontario                    | materials and installation   | \$12–17 per sq ft                      |
| GTA installer guide (entry / mid / premium) | fully installed tiers        | \$10–12 / \$13–18 / \$19–25+ per sq ft |
| Same guide, typical project                 | 400–700 sq ft backyard       | \$5,000–\$12,000 total                 |

Material typically accounts for \$3–\$9 per sq ft of the total, with excavation, base aggregate, labour and finishing the remainder [3][5]. Toronto's clay soil typically requires 4–6 inches of crushed limestone base, a factor that pushes local base costs toward the upper end of the GTA range [3].

## 2 What a typical Toronto project costs

Applying the mid-market midpoint (\$15.50/sq ft) to three representative project sizes produces the estimates in Table 2. These are planning figures, not quotes — site access, soil conditions and product tier move any specific project within or outside the band.

Table 2 — Representative project costs at published mid-market rates. Derived from [3][4][5]; assumptions in \$/M.

| Project                       | Area      | At \$15.50/sq ft | At \$13–18/sq ft |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| Compact courtyard / side yard | 300 sq ft | \$4,650          | \$3,900–5,400    |
| Typical family backyard       | 500 sq ft | \$7,750          | \$6,500–9,000    |
| Large or deep lot             | 700 sq ft | \$10,850         | \$9,100–12,600   |

A typical Toronto backyard of about 500 sq ft — the reference project used throughout this report — lands at **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed**.

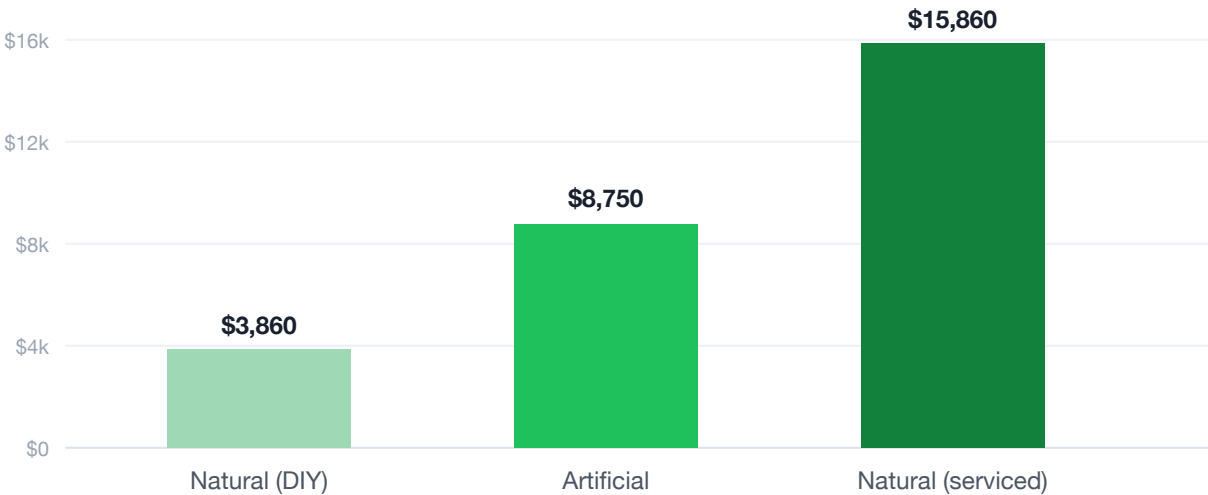
### 3 Ten-year cost comparison: artificial vs natural

The correct comparison is total cost of ownership over ten years. Table 3 sets out both stacks; every figure is either published (and cited) or labelled as an assumption.

Table 3 — Ten-year ownership stacks for a 500 sq ft Toronto lawn. Sources and assumptions: [3][6][9][10]; \$M.

| Component                                        | Artificial lawn | Natural lawn (serviced) | Natural lawn (DIY) |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Establishment (install / sod + labour)           | \$7,750         | \$1,000                 | \$1,000            |
| Irrigation, 27.9 m³/season at Toronto 2026 rates | —               | \$136/yr                | \$136/yr           |
| Mowing service / own equipment & time            | —               | \$1,200/yr (A)          | time only (A)      |
| Fertilizer, overseeding, weed control            | —               | \$150/yr (A)            | \$150/yr (A)       |
| Upkeep (rinse, brush, infill top-up)             | \$100/yr (A)    | —                       | —                  |
| Ten-year total                                   | \$8,750         | \$15,860                | \$3,860 + time     |

(A) marks a stated assumption — see §M. The two natural-lawn scenarios bracket how Toronto households maintain grass: fully serviced care, or do-it-yourself care where the principal cost is the owner's time.



**Figure 1** — Ten-year total cost of ownership for a 500 sq ft Toronto lawn under three maintenance regimes. DIY excludes the value of the owner's time. Derived from [3][6][9][10]; assumptions in §M.

Against **professionally serviced** care, artificial turf is the cheaper ten-year option by roughly **\$7,100**; against **do-it-yourself** care, turf never catches up in cash — what it purchases is roughly 300 hours of the owner's time over the decade.

## 4 The water component at Toronto's 2026 rates

Toronto Water bills a combined water-and-wastewater rate of **\$4.8629/m<sup>3</sup>** for residential Block 1 customers in 2026, following a Council-approved 3.75% increase effective January 1 [6][7]. This is a single combined charge — there is no separate sewer rate. A typical household using 230 m<sup>3</sup> per year pays about \$1,118 in 2026, up \$40 from 2025 [7].

Using the growing-season irrigation model in §M (2.5 cm/week over 24 weeks on 46.45 m<sup>2</sup>), a 500 sq ft natural lawn consumes **27.9 m<sup>3</sup> per season**, costing about **\$136 per year** — well inside Block 1's 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> ceiling. At roughly double Peel Region's rate, Toronto's water cost is material. The dollar figure alone does not justify a turf conversion; the non-cash case rests on three factors:

- **Restriction readiness.** Chapter 851 empowers Toronto Water to declare a restriction order during a shortage, but the city currently has no standing mandatory schedule [11]. When an order is declared, artificial turf is indifferent to it.
- **Irrigation waste.** The U.S. EPA estimates that as much as 50% of outdoor irrigation water is lost to wind, evaporation and runoff [9] — treated drinking water that never reaches a root.
- **Household share.** Outdoor use accounts for more than 30% of average household consumption [9]; eliminating lawn irrigation removes the largest discretionary slice.

### LOCAL CONTEXT — TORONTO'S WATERING RULES

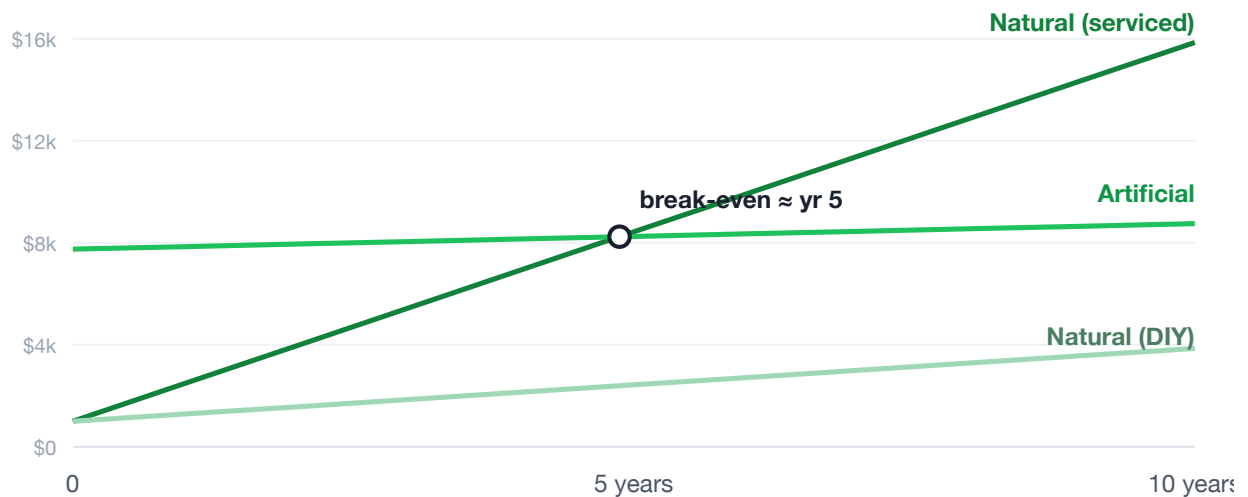
Toronto is one of the few GTA municipalities without a standing mandatory lawn-watering schedule. Neighbouring Peel and York Regions enforce odd-even rules; Toronto relies on voluntary once-a-week guidance issued each summer — a common source of confusion for homeowners who assume the same rules apply city-wide [11].

## 5 Payback period and sensitivity

Figure 2 tracks cumulative cost year by year. Against serviced care, the 500 sq ft project breaks even just before **year five** and is roughly \$7,100 ahead by year ten. Smaller projects recover faster (Table 4):

Table 4 — Break-even vs serviced lawn care, by project size. *Derived; assumptions in §M.*

| Project   | Upfront difference | Annual saving | Break-even |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| 300 sq ft | \$4,050            | \$1,331       | ≈3.0 years |
| 500 sq ft | \$6,750            | \$1,386       | ≈4.9 years |
| 700 sq ft | \$9,450            | \$1,440       | ≈6.6 years |



**Figure 2** — Cumulative ownership cost, 500 sq ft Toronto lawn, years 0–10. The artificial and serviced-natural curves cross just before year five. *Derived; assumptions in \$M.*

## 6 What moves a quote up or down

Published ranges are wide because site conditions are. The factors Toronto installers price for:

- **Base preparation.** Excavation depth and aggregate volume dominate. Toronto's heavy clay soils hold water and heave in freeze-thaw cycles, so quotes routinely include 4–6 inches of crushed limestone base and drainage grading [3].
- **Access.** Mature neighbourhoods (Riverdale, Cabbagetown, The Beaches, Swansea) often mean narrow side yards and wheelbarrow-only access, raising labour hours [2][3].
- **Product tier.** Face weight, pile height and backing separate a \$10/sq ft entry product from a \$25 premium one; putting-green surfaces sit above even premium landscape turf [5].
- **Shape and edges.** Curves, pool coping, tree rings and planting-bed borders add cutting and seaming time.
- **Project size.** Larger areas spread fixed costs (delivery, disposal, equipment) over more square feet, lowering the unit rate [3][5].

## M Methodology & data sources

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This is a desk-research report. Published figures were collected in August 2026 from the sources listed under References: City of Toronto rate pages and the 2021 Census backgrounder, Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals (Toronto Pearson Int'l A, 1981–2010), a U.S. EPA WaterSense statistics page, Toronto installer price guides (Design Turf, Southwest Greens Ontario, and the brand's own published cost guide), an Ontario sod supplier's listed prices, and published Ontario lawn-care pricing guides [3][4][5][6][8][9][10][12].

**Stated assumptions (not sourced facts):** (i) irrigation model — an actively maintained lawn receives 2.5 cm of water per week over a 24-week southern Ontario growing season (a widely used horticultural guideline); (ii) mowing service \$1,200/season; (iii) fertilizer/ overseed/weed control \$150/yr; (iv) turf upkeep \$100/yr; (v) sod establishment \$1,000 for 500 sq ft (Ontario installed range \$1.50–\$3.00/sq ft; \$2/sq ft used here) [12]; (vi) DIY time  $\approx$ 30 h/season. Derived figures combine these assumptions with the cited rates; changing any input changes the results — Section 5 shows the sensitivity to project size.

### Limitations

Prices are published planning figures, not quotations; actual quotes vary with site conditions. The irrigation model is a guideline-based estimate — real households water differently, and Toronto's 785.9 mm of well-distributed annual precipitation reduces irrigation need in normal summers [8]. Ten-year figures are undiscounted nominal dollars. This report is not an engineering, agronomic or financial assessment of any specific property.

## R References

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### CITE THIS REPORT

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