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August gardening: Turf is an environmental plus.

Covering Lawns with Decks and Patios Increases Flooding

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By *Wes Porter* Tuesday, August 21, 2012

Traditional lawns allow downpours to soak into the soil. Replacing such lawns with decks and patios increases the risk of flooding, as British gardeners learnt the hard way earlier this year.

The British government's leading adviser on climate change and flooding, Lord Krebs, blames celebrity gardeners for encouraging people to tear up their lawns and install decks and patios. New satellite pictures show the proportion of gardens in towns and cities in England that have been paved over increased from 28 per cent to 48 per cent between 2001 and 2011, according to *The Daily Telegraph*.

If nothing else, it should – but probably won't – cause lawn naysayers to restrain their customary diatribes against North America's principle crop. Lawns have been described as the "carpets of the garden," setting off all else. True, but they are far more than that.

Parks with well-maintained lawns are more frequented than comparable paved areas. "Please Walk On The Grass" invited the signs that the late Tommy Thompson had installed in Toronto parks. And people did.

Home lawns offer the ideal play surface for children. Playing fields covered similarly with turf are the choice for most sports enthusiasts – check out the injuries artificial turf causes. And can you imagine a golf course without grass?

Turf is an environmental plus. Allowing water to percolate into the soil, it prevents erosion and, as we have seen, reduces the chance of flooding. Grass absorbs gases from the environment, such as carbon dioxide, utilizing these as nutrients. It filters out dust and particulates and reduces noise by 8 to 10 decibels. Lawns also reduce temperature, acting as natural air conditioners.

And if for no other reason, lawns should be encouraged as they increase property values – by 15 to 20 per cent, it has been estimated. And realtors tell us that a home with a well-maintained lawn sells faster.

Decks and patios have their place in the landscape but not at the expense of lawns. Unfortunately these days, lawns are seldom even mentioned, let alone promoted by what the landscape industry have come to call ‘garden communicators.’



Wes Porter [Bio](#)

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