



Improve your game,
enhance your home

PUTTING GREENS



COURTESY NEW ENGLAND CUSTOM PUTTING GREENS

New England Custom Putting Greens installed synthetic greens at these homes in Dover, top photo, and Newburyport, above.

BY JAY GEARAN

"You put in a swimming pool for the kids. Now it's your turn. Now it's time for a backyard putting green."

Thomas McNamara Jr., president of New England Custom Putting Greens, often speaks those words to potential customers who, like himself, have a passion for golf.

And golfers, looking to improve their games and also enhance their backyard property, are diving in.

"Every year we get bigger and bigger," says the 35-year-old McNamara, who has installed more than 200 synthetic putting greens since opening his business four years ago. He adds, "The putting green creates a nice focal point in the yard, and for the whole family it can mean more quality time spent together."

And valuable golf practice time. Blasting long shots may be fun

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

Thomas McNamara, owner of New England Custom Putting Greens, stands near a 15- by 28-foot green with chipping pads that he installed at a house in Shrewsbury.



PHOTOGRAPHY TOM PETIG

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

on spacious driving ranges, but, as most golf experts would agree, chipping and putting make up at least 50 percent of the scoring. In other words, if you want to improve your golf score, you must practice near the hole.

"We create a home hole," McNamara says. "Coming home after work and being able to chip and putt in the quiet of your own back yard — it makes for some great, relaxing and memorable hours. And it's maintenance-free."

New England Custom Putting Greens, operating out of Clinton and Acushnet, Mass., sells Mirage turf, known for its patented bent fiber, which in color and substance creates a natural and realistic-looking green.

"The beauty of our greens is that they're made to receive a chip shot. They actually hold the ball," McNamara says. "Many other synthetic greens have sand-filled turf with straight-end fibers that must be sand filled and periodically rolled with a heavy water-filled sod roller. Our turf fibers are manufactured to stand up naturally. It's as close to a real green as you can get."

Cello Ciccone of Leominster became a backyard putting enthusiast three years ago when he had McNamara install a green in his yard near his swimming pool.

"I love it," says Ciccone. "Our friends will come over and we'll have some cool putting and chipping contests. Even after we've played a round at a course nearby, we're ready later for some short-game fun in the yard."

He was so pleased with his backyard green that Ciccone ordered another one for inside the showroom at his store, Blue Heron Enterprises in Leominster.

McNamara's crew is planning to install a putting green inside the showroom at Larry Glick's Bancroft Nissan auto dealership in Auburn. Also in the planning stage is a 1,000-square-foot green for the Gateway Office Complex on Central Street in Leominster.

"It's great for people on breaks in office buildings," McNamara said.

On the Mirage turf, McNamara promises a true roll, something every golfer needs to practice his putting techniques.

"One of the biggest misconceptions about synthetic putting greens is that people think it's like outdoor carpet or like a miniature golf surface," McNamara said. "But with Mirage you get the feel of putting on real bent-grass greens."

Explaining the installation, McNamara said the process takes only a couple of days. "We come in and mark out the green according to where the customer wants it

placed. Then, we use a sod-cutter to remove the grass. We dig down between eight inches and a foot and set the base with crushed stone and stone dust."

McNamara added, "We work as cleanly as possible. We want the green to fit in with the overall landscaping plan of the yard."

New England Custom Putting Greens offers two types of installation — a loose lay or a glued-down surface. McNamara said that a standard backyard putting green measuring 300 square feet with three holes costs between \$3,000 and \$5,000. Accessories such as chipping mats and lighted cups can be included.

The company has taken on bigger projects such as a 5,000-square-foot green perfect for a par 3, 150-yard hole at an ocean-side home in Kennebunkport, only a mid-iron shot away from the vacation residence of former President George Bush and former first lady Barbara Bush.

Other high-profile installations by the company include the Butch Harmon Club in Rockland and Bosse Sports in Sudbury.

Mirage turf comes with a 10-year limited warranty.

And McNamara has advice for any homeowner who has removed an above-ground pool. The base that supported the pool, he says, "makes a perfect surface for a putting green."



New England Custom Putting Greens' projects have ranged from large to small, and clients have included homeowners and businesses. Pictured above is an installation in Maine. At right is a putting green at a home in North Reading.



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