

Artificial Grass in Ajax: 2026 Cost & ROI Report

Installation pricing, ten-year ownership costs, water-bill impacts and payback analysis for Ajax homeowners

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COVERAGE	Town of Ajax, Regional Municipality of Durham, Ontario
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Artificial Grass Ajax Research publishes data-driven local studies on residential landscaping, water use and outdoor surfaces in Ajax and the Greater Toronto Area. This report is provided free for information purposes.

ABSTRACT

This report assembles published 2026 pricing for residential artificial-grass installation in Ajax and the Greater Toronto Area, then models the ten-year cost of owning a synthetic lawn against a natural lawn on a typical Ajax property. All inputs are drawn from published sources — installer price guides, the Region of Durham's 2026 water and wastewater rates, and Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals — with every modelling assumption stated where it appears.

We find that a mid-range artificial lawn for a typical 500 sq ft Ajax backyard costs **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed**, that irrigating the same area of natural lawn uses roughly **27.9 m³ of water per season (about \$106 at Durham's 2026 combined rates)**, and that the investment breaks even in approximately **five years when compared against professionally serviced lawn care** — but does not pay back against do-it-yourself care, where the trade-off is the owner's time rather than cash.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

\$10–25

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

27.9 m³

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

\$106/yr

water + wastewater cost at
Durham's 2026 rate of
\$3.786/m³

≈5 yrs

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

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1 The Ajax market and the 2026 pricing basis

Ajax is one of the GTA's fastest-growing municipalities, with 126,666 residents and 39,488 occupied private dwellings recorded in the 2021 Census; about 64.7% of the housing stock is single-detached and the median household income is \$119,000 [1]. Typical detached lots run roughly 50 ft by 114 ft, with newer subdivisions producing progressively smaller backyards [2]. That profile — owner-occupied family homes on suburban lots — places Ajax firmly in the core residential market for artificial grass in Durham Region.

Three published price references anchor this report's 2026 cost basis: a GTA-wide installer's tier guide, a local installer serving Ajax and Durham Region, and a published Canadian cost breakdown (Table 1). They converge on a working range of **\$10–\$25 per sq ft installed**, with the middle of the market at \$13–\$18.

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

Reference	Basis	Published figure
GTA installer guide (entry / mid / premium)	fully installed, residential	\$10–12 / \$13–18 / \$19–25+ per sq ft
Local installer serving Ajax/Durham	install-only / with full base prep	\$6–8 / \$11–13 per sq ft
Canadian cost guide (1,000 sq ft model)	material + labour + base + fees	\$8,790–\$18,840 total
GTA guide, typical project	400–700 sq ft backyard	\$5,000–\$12,000 total

Material typically accounts for \$3–\$8 per sq ft of the total, with excavation, aggregate base, compaction, labour and finishing making up the remainder [5]. The spread between entry and premium is driven less by the turf carpet itself than by what sits under it — Section 6 returns to this.

2 What a typical Ajax project costs

Applying the mid-market band to three representative backyard sizes produces the project estimates in Table 2. The mid-market midpoint (\$15.50/sq ft) is used for the single-figure column; the range spans the published \$13–\$18 band.

Table 2 — Representative project costs at published mid-market rates. Derived from [3]; 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

These are planning figures, not quotes: site access, soil conditions and product selection move any specific project within or outside the band. A typical Ajax family 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 frame is total cost of ownership over the surface's service life. Quality residential turf is routinely warranted for 10–15 years; this report uses a ten-year window. Table 3 sets out both ownership stacks. Every figure is either published (and cited) or labelled as an assumption in the methodology.

Table 3 — Ten-year ownership stacks for a 500 sq ft Ajax lawn. *Sources and assumptions: [3][6][7]; \$M.*

Component	Artificial lawn	Natural (serviced)	Natural (DIY)
Establishment (install / sod + labour)	\$7,750	\$1,000	\$1,000
Irrigation, 27.9 m ³ /season at Durham 2026 rates	—	\$106/yr	\$106/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	\$15,560	\$3,560 + time

(A) marks a stated assumption, not a sourced figure — see §M. The two natural-lawn scenarios bracket how Ajax households actually maintain grass: fully serviced care, or do-it-yourself care where the principal cost is the owner's time (roughly 30 hours per season at 24 mows — assumption).

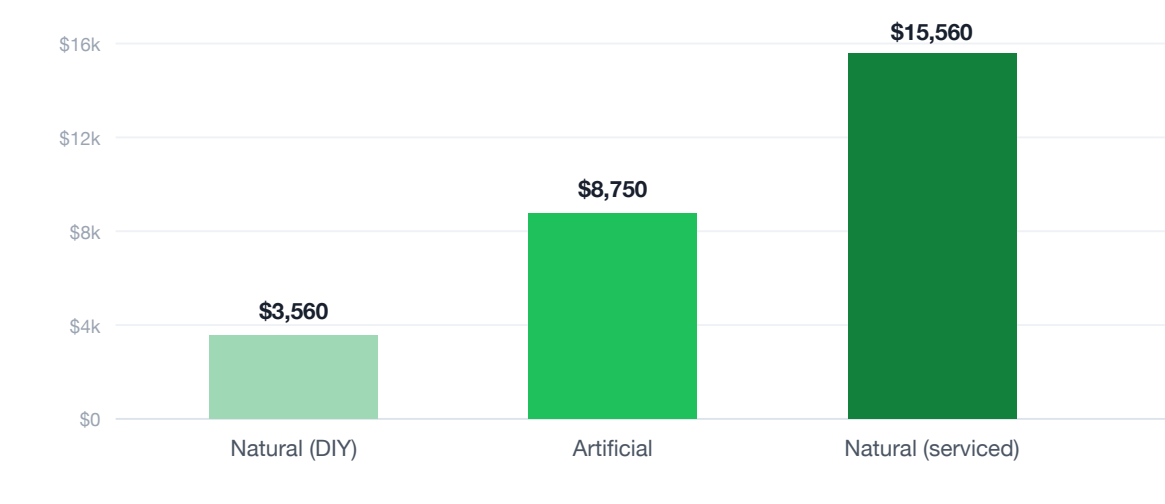


Figure 1 — Ten-year total cost of ownership for a 500 sq ft Ajax lawn under three maintenance regimes. DIY excludes the value of the owner's time. *Derived from [3][6][7]; assumptions in §M.*

The finding cuts both ways, and we report both: against **professionally serviced** lawn care, artificial turf is the cheaper ten-year proposition by roughly **\$6,800**; against **do-it-yourself** care, turf never catches up in cash terms — what it purchases instead is roughly 300 hours of the owner's time over the decade and a lawn that stays usable through drought-guidance summers.

4 The water component at Durham's 2026 rates

Water and sanitary sewer in Ajax are billed by the Region of Durham through its MyDurhamWater portal, not by the Town directly. Effective January 1, 2026 (By-laws 75-2023 and 76-2023), residential customers pay a combined **\$3.786/m³** in the first billing block (0–45 m³/month): water \$1.431/m³ plus a volumetric sewer surcharge of \$2.355/m³ [8][9]. Combined rates rose approximately 5% in 2026.

Using the growing-season irrigation model described in §M (2.5 cm/week over 24 weeks on 46.45 m²), a 500 sq ft natural lawn consumes **27.9 m³ per season**, costing about **\$106/year** in water and wastewater charges [8][9]. Even at this rate, irrigation savings alone do not justify a turf conversion. The water case for turf rests instead on non-cash factors:

- **Restriction resilience.** Durham's standing By-law #85-2003 mandates odd-even lawn watering every May through September; in summer 2025 the Region escalated to full mandatory outdoor bans in north Durham communities during drought conditions [10][11]. Artificial turf is indifferent to all of these.
- **Runoff and waste.** The U.S. EPA estimates that as much as 50% of outdoor irrigation water is lost to wind, evaporation and runoff [12] — water that in Ajax is drawn from Lake Ontario, treated at the Ajax Water Supply Plant, and billed before it reaches a root.
- **Household share.** Outdoor use accounts for more than 30% of average household water consumption, and summer demand in Ontario can spike up to 50% above baseline [12][13].

LOCAL CONTEXT — DURHAM'S MANDATORY ODD-EVEN BYLAW

Regional Water Supply By-law #85-2003 applies every summer across Durham Region, including Ajax: odd-numbered addresses water only on odd calendar days, even-numbered only on even days, May through September. The Region can escalate to full outdoor bans during drought, as it did for north Durham in 2025. An artificial lawn eliminates irrigation entirely and is never subject to watering restrictions [10][11].

5 Payback period and sensitivity

Against serviced lawn care, the 500 sq ft reference project breaks even just past **year five** and is roughly \$6,800 ahead by year ten. Smaller projects recover faster because mowing service is largely a flat cost regardless of lawn size (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	\$1,313	≈3.1 years
500 sq ft	\$6,750	\$1,356	≈5.0 years
700 sq ft	\$9,450	\$1,398	≈6.8 years

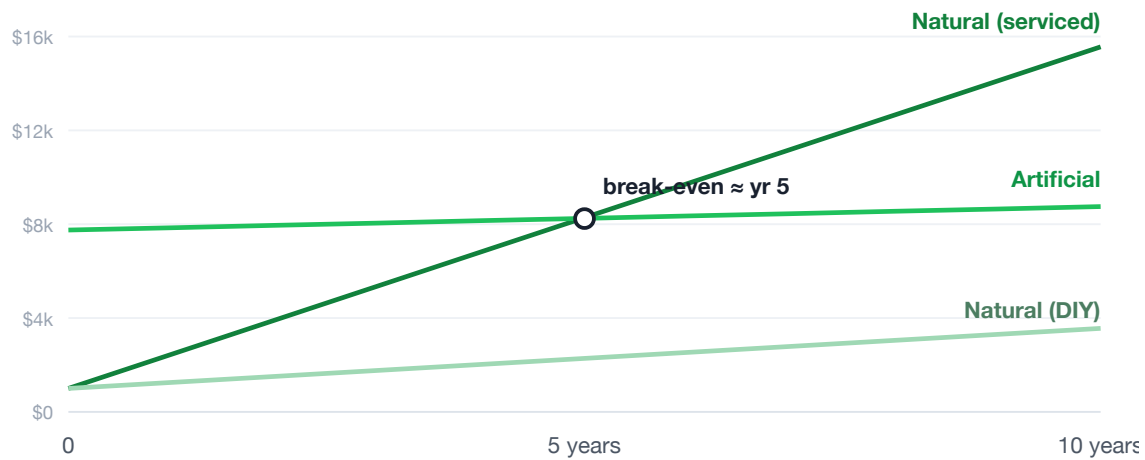


Figure 2 — Cumulative ownership cost, 500 sq ft Ajax lawn, years 0–10. The artificial and serviced-natural curves cross near year five. *Derived; assumptions in \$M.*

6 What moves a quote up or down

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

- **Base preparation.** Excavation depth and aggregate volume dominate cost. Durham Region's clay-rich soils hold water and heave in freeze-thaw cycles, so quotes routinely include deeper bases and drainage grading [5].
- **Access.** Established Ajax neighbourhoods along the lakeshore and around Duffins Creek often mean narrow side yards and wheelbarrow-only access, raising labour hours.
- **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 [3][4].
- **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 mobilization) over more square feet, lowering the unit rate [3].

M Methodology & data sources

This is a desk-research report. Published figures were collected in August 2026 from the sources listed under References: the Region of Durham's 2026 rate schedule, the 2021 Census via the Town of Ajax, Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals (Toronto Pearson Int'l A, 1991–2020), a U.S. EPA WaterSense statistics page, an Ontario sod supplier's listed prices, Ontario lawn-care pricing guides, and published GTA installer price guides.

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 material ≈\$0.80/sq ft plus site prep and laying labour); (vi) DIY time ≈30 h/season (≈300 h over the ten-year horizon). Derived figures combine these assumptions with the cited rates; changing any assumption 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 Ajax's 806.8 mm of well-distributed annual precipitation reduces irrigation need in normal summers [14]. Ten-year figures are undiscounted nominal dollars. Durham's combined water/sewer rate is used for all irrigation costing; the fixed monthly meter charge (\$24.04) and annual sewer charge (\$111.00) are excluded as they apply regardless of outdoor use. This report is not an engineering, agronomic or financial assessment of any specific property.

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