

Artificial Grass in Markham: 2026 Cost & ROI Report

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

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COVERAGE	City of Markham, Regional Municipality of York, Ontario
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Artificial Grass Markham Research publishes data-driven local studies on residential landscaping, water use and outdoor surfaces in Markham 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 Markham and the Greater Toronto Area, then models the ten-year cost of owning a synthetic lawn against a natural lawn on a typical Markham property. Inputs are drawn from published sources only — GTA installer price guides, a Markham installer's published rates, the City of Markham's 2026 combined water and wastewater rate, and Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals for the Buttonville station inside Markham — with every modelling assumption stated where it is used.

We find that a mid-range artificial lawn for a typical 500 sq ft Markham backyard costs **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed** (and \$5,500–\$6,500 at the Markham-published full-base band); that keeping the same natural lawn watered through the growing season takes roughly **27.9 m³ — about \$165 at the City's 2026 combined rate of \$5.90634/m³**, a rate that has risen about 23% in three years; and that the investment breaks even in approximately **4.8 years against professionally serviced lawn care**. Against do-it-yourself care there is no cash payback — the return is measured in the owner's time.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

\$6,500–9,000

installed cost of a typical
500 sq ft Markham
backyard at 2026 GTA
mid-market rates

27.9 m³

seasonal irrigation demand
of that lawn (24-week
model)

≈\$165/yr

that water at Markham's
2026 combined rate of
\$5.90634/m³

≈4.8 yrs

payback vs professionally
serviced lawn care (500 sq
ft)

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1 The Markham market and the 2026 pricing basis

Markham's case for this analysis starts with its housing stock: 338,503 residents in 110,867 households at the 2021 Census, 81.7% of dwellings owner-occupied, average household size 3.0 people [1]. The stock that matters here is the post-1990s growth subdivisions — Wismer, Cornell, Box Grove, Greensborough — where detached homes sit on narrow-frontage lots of roughly 10–13 m (33–43 ft), semis on 8–10 m and towns on 6–8 m; Cornell's New Urbanist plan goes narrower still, with rear-lane garages [7]. Narrow lots mean compact yards — hence the 300–700 sq ft project sizes modelled here.

Three published references anchor the 2026 cost basis: a GTA-wide installer price guide, the same guide's typical-project figures, and the published rates of a Markham installer (Table 1). Read together, **most Markham residential projects price between \$10 and \$25 per sq ft installed**, with the GTA mid-market at \$13–\$18 and the Markham-published full-base band lower, at \$11–\$13.

Table 1 — Published 2026 installed-price references relevant to the Markham market. Sources: [8][9].

Reference	Basis	Published figure
GTA installer guide (entry / mid / premium)	fully installed, residential	\$10–12 / \$13–18 / \$19–25+ per sq ft
Same guide, typical project	400–700 sq ft backyard	\$5,000–\$12,000 total
Markham installer, published rates	install-only / with full base prep	\$6–8 / \$11–13 per sq ft
Markham installer, putting-green turf	install-only / with base prep	\$18 / \$23 per sq ft

The local figures also show where the money goes: the \$4–\$5 per sq ft gap between install-only and full-base pricing is excavation, aggregate, compaction and grading. Section 6 returns to why that layer matters in Markham.

2 What a typical Markham project costs

Applying the two bands to three representative project sizes produces Table 2. The single-figure column uses the GTA mid-market midpoint (\$15.50/sq ft); the range columns show the GTA mid band and the Markham-published full-base band side by side.

Table 2 — Representative project costs at published 2026 rates. Derived from [8][9]; assumptions in \$M.

Project	Area	At \$15.50/sq ft	GTA mid \$13–18	Markham-publ. \$11–13
Compact courtyard or side yard	300 sq ft	\$4,650	\$3,900–5,400	\$3,300–3,900
Typical family backyard	500 sq ft	\$7,750	\$6,500–9,000	\$5,500–6,500
Large or deep lot	700 sq ft	\$10,850	\$9,100–12,600	\$7,700–9,100

These are planning figures, not quotations. The reference project for the rest of this report is the 500 sq ft family backyard — typical of the yards behind the city's narrow-lot detached homes — at **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed** at GTA mid-market rates, or \$5,500–\$6,500 at the Markham-published band.

3 Ten-year cost comparison: artificial vs natural

The honest comparison frame is total cost of ownership across the surface's service life. Quality residential turf is sold with warranties running to 15 years [12]; this report uses a ten-year window. Table 3 lays out both ownership stacks; every figure is either published and cited or labelled (A) as a stated assumption in \$M.

Table 3 — Ten-year ownership stacks for a 500 sq ft Markham lawn. *Sources and assumptions: [8][9][10][11]; \$M.*

Component	Artificial lawn	Natural lawn (serviced)	Natural lawn (DIY)
Establishment (install / sod + labour)	\$7,750	\$1,000	\$1,000
Irrigation, 27.9 m ³ /season at Markham's 2026 combined rate	—	\$165/yr	\$165/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	\$16,150	\$4,150 + time

(A) marks a stated assumption rather than a sourced figure. The two natural-lawn columns bracket how Markham households actually keep grass: fully serviced care, or do-it-yourself care whose principal cost is the owner's time — roughly 30 hours per season at 24 mows (assumption).

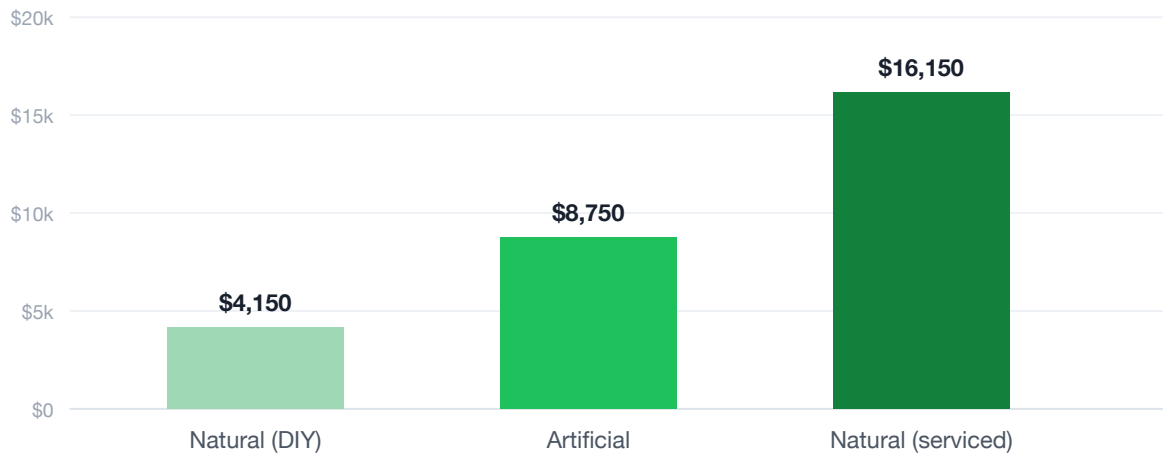


Figure 1 — Ten-year total cost of ownership for a 500 sq ft Markham lawn under three maintenance regimes. DIY excludes the value of the owner's time. *Derived from [8][9][10][11]; assumptions in \$M.*

The result cuts both ways, and we report both. Against **professionally serviced** care, artificial turf is the cheaper ten-year proposition by roughly **\$7,400**. Against **do-it-yourself** care it never catches up in cash: what it purchases instead is roughly 300 hours of the owner's time across the decade, a lawn that stays green inside the City's watering rules without any scheduling, and an end to re-sodding shaded or worn patches.

4 The water component at Markham's 2026 rates

Markham bills a single combined water and wastewater rate — **\$5.90634/m³ effective April 1, 2026** [2]. The City does not treat its own water: it buys wholesale from York Region, which buys in turn from Toronto and Peel — a pass-through that was about 68% of the combined rate in 2023 [2][3]. The rate has climbed from \$4.7937/m³ in 2023, roughly 23% in three years [3].

Under the \$M irrigation model (2.5 cm weekly over 24 weeks on 46.45 m²), a 500 sq ft natural lawn uses **27.9 m³ per season** — about **\$165 at the 2026 rate**, versus ≈\$134 three years ago. Note two caveats: even at Markham's rates, irrigation is only ~11% of the serviced-lawn annual stack, so water savings alone do not justify conversion; and with 862.4 mm of well-distributed annual precipitation at Buttonville (July among the wetter months), real demand swings widely by summer [5]. The stronger water case is non-cash:

- **Restriction-proofing.** By-law 2019-53 confines summer watering to alternate days and one three-hour window; turf is indifferent [4].
- **Waste avoided.** The U.S. EPA estimates up to 50% of outdoor irrigation is lost to wind, evaporation and runoff — yet fully billed [10].
- **Share removed.** Outdoor use is more than 30% of average household consumption [10].

LOCAL CONTEXT — WATER USE BY-LAW 2019-53

From June 1 to September 30, odd-numbered Markham addresses may water outdoors only on odd calendar days, even-numbered addresses only on even days — and within one window per permitted day, either 6–9 a.m. or 6–9 p.m. New sod or seed earns a two-month exemption [4].

5 Payback period and sensitivity

Figure 2 tracks cumulative cost for the reference project: against serviced care the curves cross at about **year 4.8** and turf ends the decade ≈\$7,400 ahead; against DIY care they never cross. Because mowing and lawn-care pricing is largely flat while only irrigation scales with area, larger projects break even later (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	\$1,349	≈3.0 years
500 sq ft	\$6,750	\$1,415	≈4.8 years
700 sq ft	\$9,450	\$1,480	≈6.4 years

Pricing band matters as much as size: at the Markham-published \$12/sq ft midpoint the project installs for \$6,000 and breaks even in ≈3.5 years; at premium GTA pricing (\$19–25/sq ft), about seven.

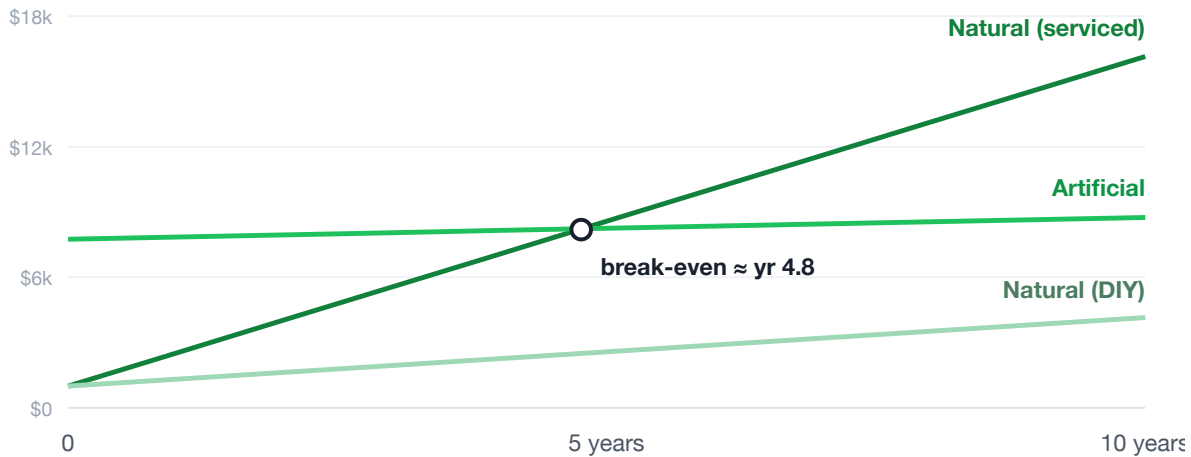


Figure 2 — Cumulative ownership cost, 500 sq ft Markham lawn, years 0–10. The artificial and serviced-natural curves cross at about year 4.8; the DIY curve is never reached. *Derived; assumptions in \$M.*

6 What moves a quote up or down

Published ranges are wide because sites are. The factors Markham installers price for:

- **Base preparation.** Excavation depth and aggregate volume dominate. Markham sits on heavy till that holds water and heaves through freeze-thaw — Buttonville normals run from a January average low of -10.1°C to a July average high of 27.3°C [5] — so full-base quotes include deeper excavation and drainage grading; the local published gap between install-only and full-base work is \$4–5/sq ft [9].
- **Access.** Narrow-frontage subdivisions (10–13 m detached lots, and tighter again in Cornell's rear-lane blocks) often leave no machine path to the backyard, adding wheelbarrow labour hours [7].
- **Product tier.** Face weight, pile height and backing separate entry products from premium ones; specialty putting surfaces price above even premium landscape turf [8][9].
- **Shape and edges.** Curves, planting beds, tree rings and fence lines add cutting and seaming time.
- **Front-yard rules.** Markham By-law 2006-96 requires standard detached lots to keep at least 40% of the front yard in soft landscaping; whether artificial turf satisfies that definition should be verified with the City before a front-yard conversion is quoted [7].

A boundary worth stating plainly: a turf conversion is not flood protection. When slow-moving thunderstorms dropped more than 100 mm on parts of the GTA in a few hours on July 16, 2024 — over \$940 million in insured damage region-wide [6] — lawn type was irrelevant to basement outcomes. Grading, downspout discharge and backwater valves decide those.

M Methodology & data sources

This is a desk-research report. Published figures were collected in August 2026 from the sources listed under References: the City of Markham's water and sewer rates page, York Region's outdoor water-use bylaw summary, a Markham rate explainer (Markham Review), 2021 Census data via Canadian Data Insights, Environment and Climate Change Canada 1991–2020 climate normals for Toronto/Buttonville A (the station sits inside Markham; the figures are carried here via the Wikipedia weatherbox because ECCC's normals pages do not render programmatically), the Insurance Bureau of Canada, a local development firm's bylaw explainer, a GTA installer price guide, a Markham installer's published rates, the U.S. EPA WaterSense program, a sod supplier's listed prices and a manufacturer's warranty page.

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, overseeding and weed control \$150/yr; (iv) turf upkeep \$100/yr; (v) sod establishment \$1,000 for 500 sq ft (listed sod material ≈\$0.80/sq ft [11] plus site preparation and laying labour); (vi) DIY mowing time ≈30 h/season. Derived figures combine these assumptions with the cited rates; change any assumption and the results move — Section 5 shows the sensitivity to project size and pricing band.

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, By-law 2019-53 constrains when they may water, and Markham's 862.4 mm of annual precipitation reduces irrigation need in normal summers. The 2026 combined rate is applied as a flat marginal cost to modelled volume. Ten-year figures are undiscounted nominal dollars. This report is not an engineering, agronomic or financial assessment of any specific property.

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