



**Glass Act**  
A San Francisco living room evokes Piet Mondrian M4

# MANSION

**Garage Sabotage**  
Is it time to make room for your cars? M3



## The Future of Lawns Is Fake

Homeowners are shifting to artificial landscaping to curb water use, save maintenance hassles, and avoid dust and dirt



The 5,500-square-foot home of the Christensens in Newport Beach, Calif., makes generous use of artificial grass, like that installed near the pool, where dogs Rusty and Pilot rest.

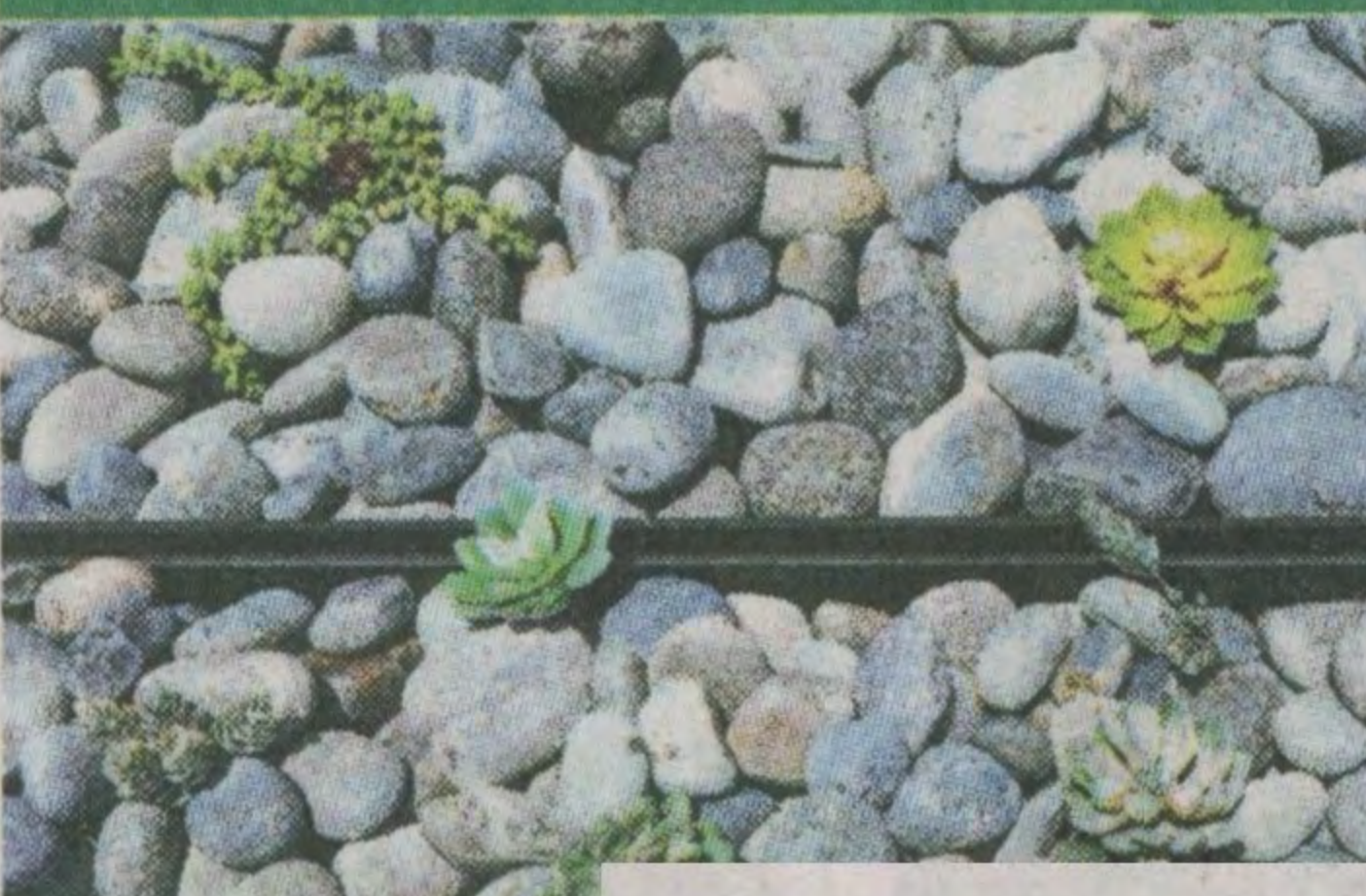
Putting green with nylon blades, \$2,100



Polyethylene dog run, \$1,400



Plastic succulents to help hide a TV, \$100



Polyethylene walls, steel backing, \$10,000



By ALINA DIZIK

For nearly \$100,000, Matthew and Nina Christensen got exactly the landscaping they wanted. The 2,029-square-foot area around their home in Newport Beach, Calif., has several shades of green, gentle slopes and altering lengths of bluntly cut grass that make it look freshly mowed no matter the season. Three lush living walls cover an exterior concrete wall. What's more, it is basically maintenance-free.

"Our neighbors on both sides are in contact with our landscaper," says Mr. Christensen, 39 years old, a commercial real-estate developer. If it sounds too good to be true, it is. The greenery is almost all artificial.

The Christensens' landscaping includes about \$23,000 worth of faux elements, including synthetic grass around the pool, on a putting green, along a dog run and covering the home's second-floor terrace. The couple tested the living walls by hanging them outdoors during their home's three-year construction phase. In all, they bought 20 artificial green-wall panels through U.K.-based Vistagreen and installed them in three custom

**TOTAL LANDSCAPING \$100,000 INCLUDING \$23,000 FOR FAUX GREENERY**

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Matthew and Nina Christensen, with Rusty, stand on an artificial-turf terrace outside their master bedroom. The faux landscaping on the terrace cost \$3,500.

## Retirement Homes That Float

Wealthy retirees are increasingly spending some golden years living on luxurious motor yachts

By EMILY NONKO



**GARRY HUBBARD DIDN'T** envision a quiet life for himself and his wife, Libby Hubbard, on solid ground. He wanted to retire aboard a yacht.

With the help of Phil Friedman, managing director of the yacht consulting firm Port Royal Group, the Hubbards spent four years and roughly \$5 million to design and build a retirement home that would take them from the Texas coast to Florida, and from the Bahamas up the eastern seaboard.

The couple recently wrapped their first full year of cruising on an 80-foot Offshore Pilot House Motor Yacht. This spring, they sold their full-time, 5,200-square-foot, five-bedroom home in Plano, Texas. (The Hubbards would not disclose the sale price, but Parker Wood, president of



**\$5 MILLION**  
2,000 Sq. ft.



Libby and Garry Hubbard, above, enjoy a glass of rosé on the deck of their yacht, let it Bee, left.

Dallas-based Josh DeShong Real Estate, estimated its value between \$600,000 to \$1.1 million). They made their 2,000-square-foot yacht, which they named let it Bee, their official retirement home. (They kept a separate vacation home.)

"A lot of people talk about doing these types of things and never do it," Mr. Hubbard says. "We're actually getting it done."

The Hubbards are part of a growing customer base in the yachting industry, according to Mike Carlson, of Florida Yacht Management and the brokerage 26 North Yachts. What was once an "old-school, small industry," he

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## MANSION



### FLOWER WARS

Even as homeowners are taking the plunge with artificial grass, faux flowers are still used sparingly outdoors.

"It's still not an accepted practice," says landscape architect Janice Parker, who uses artificial grass on New York City rooftops. She recently used fake ginger flowers, oversize zinc leaves and anthurium flowers for a landscaping showpiece, but says materials aren't hearty enough to withstand the outdoors, and some look really fake.

Not everyone agrees. Paula Doherty, founder of LanaiScapes, Fla., says her customers are buying her faux potted flowers for exterior doorways, pool areas and indoor sunrooms. They look believable in small quantities, she adds. The faux flowers she uses are coated so they can be placed outside without fading, she says.

Boxwood plants are the one exception, says Christopher LaGuardia, a landscape architect in Water Mill, N.Y. He uses artificial boxwoods to enhance privacy on a terrace or to add freshness to hard-to-reach exterior planters. "Faux boxwood has gotten really advanced, where you almost can't tell at first," he says.



**\$50,000**  
INCLUDING \$8,000 FOR ARTIFICIAL TURF

Alexa Suskin put in an artificial lawn in the backyard of her Brooklyn home because of a lack of sun, but she added real plants along its perimeter.

on low-maintenance options, which include turf and boxwood hedges that he puts up for privacy.

Today's synthetic products—typically a combination of nylon, polyethylene and polypropylene—are made specifically for the home and have better drainage, stay cooler in the sun and remain in good condition for years. The newer turf uses plastic polymers for blades that are

woven into a permeable backing system made from plastics that are better bonded, stitched and seamed, with various infill materials to keep the blades in position. Crushed rock is placed underneath. Longer blades feel softer, and multiple blades woven together have a more grasslike feel underfoot. They often include thatch, a material to mimic dried grass. Also, pigment

inches off the top of the yard and then fill with recycled material before placing the turf. The lawn is installed with a slight crown in the middle, similar to grass.

When a natural lawn in her Brooklyn townhouse didn't get enough sunlight, Alexa Suskin, 36, sought another option. She and her husband, Marc Suskin, worked with a landscape designer to complete a

backyard garden and patio in 2016, using natural plants on the perimeter of a faux lawn. The project cost \$50,000, including \$8,000 for the artificial turf.

Passersby can't tell real from synthetic, and several neighbors have followed suit. "It looks real and I'm less likely to step on a bee," says Ms. Suskin.

James Stephenson, who worked with Ms. Suskin and another neighbor, says clients often choose artificial turf when they have small children they want to keep out of dirt and away from bugs, or to use under lawn furniture to keep the area from getting torn up. Increasingly, he is opting for other faux elements, including boulders and ivy walls with faux leaves above eye level, he adds.

Landscape designer Tim O'Shea, based in Sausalito, Calif., says some authentic plants can be closely integrated with faux grass. He has, for example, had a genuine boxwood bush grow out of an opening in an artificial lawn, or put wild native plants around a turf's edges. Projects can vary in price from \$500,000 to \$7 million, he adds.

But, he says, "there's a tipping point to using too many synthetics, and it doesn't mean the garden will be more ecological."

About 15% of his clients incorporate some artificial turf, he says. But while saving on water is a plus, the use of non-biodegradable plastics makes homeowners looking to lessen their ecological footprint more hesitant.

Still, more are giving up the fight against faux. During a real-estate association board meeting a few years ago, Palm Beach, Fla., landscape architect Keith Williams voted against using faux turf. Now, he says it is a staple in his work, including at his own home. Projects range from \$300,000 to \$1 million for new homes.

He is especially quick to recommend faux turf between stone or pavers or for a driveway, for a look that is lush without the necessary upkeep. "It's been a slow transition, but I love it now," he says.

▶ Can you spot the fakes? Take the faux-greenery quiz at [WSJ.com/RealEstate](http://WSJ.com/RealEstate).