

Netafim Subsurface Lawn Irrigation

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'T'.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is above the 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font.The logo for DesignBuild, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is to the upper right of the word.

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Netafim's Mauricio
Troche

The global micro-irrigation market is expected to grow 17.4 percent annually and become a \$6.8-billion market in the U.S. by 2021, according to DecisionDatabases.com. While subsurface drip irrigation for lawns will contribute to that growth, most of it will be driven by the need for more efficient food production. Simcha Blass, an Israeli water engineer, discovered the advantages for plant health of a drip-based tube that slowly released water. In 1965 he founded [Netafim](http://Netafim.com), which pioneered drip irrigation worldwide. Mauricio Troche, director of landscape and turf who manages the sales and marketing efforts for the landscape division of Netafim, discusses drip irrigation trends.

Is interest in subsurface drip irrigation for lawns growing? How fast? Is the growth mostly regional, say in California or the arid Southwest?

Interest is growing and rather quickly, not only among green industry professionals but even more so with end users seeking a way to keep their turf while significantly cutting water use at the same time. We field questions every day from every customer segment on the proper techniques and installation methods. It is growing in all parts of the U.S. as contractors become more knowledgeable on the technology and end-users become more aware of the need to reduce water. Southern California and Texas are showing the largest interest now, but we have always helped install a fair amount of subsurface drip irrigation in all parts of the U.S., including the Rocky Mountains, the northeast, the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. In those markets it is fairly common.

Why should contractors become proficient with and provide drip irrigation for lawns, regardless of their market area?

Subsurface drip is a solution for an ever-growing problem of diminished water supplies and higher water costs. We are seeing a real shift in the attitudes of end users, as they are increasingly realizing that traditional spray heads and rotors are not going to provide the water savings they need.

As landscape designs evolve to become more water-efficient, subsurface drip irrigation will enable designers to better incorporate turfgrass as part of a sustainable landscape plan.

Progressive and forward-thinking contractors are always looking to the future. They know that the majority of customers are looking to keep their turf, but just don't know how. Contractors who offer a solution for keeping turfgrass will be the ones who get the work. For those in markets where water is not an issue, there are still plenty of benefits, including elimination of water lost to runoff and evaporation, as well as damage caused by overspray onto sidewalks, driveways, fences or sides of building, not to mention a lower water bill.



PHOTO: NETAFIM

What technical and installation skills must contractors master to become experts at installing drip irrigation on lawns?

Most contractors already have the skill sets needed, such as understanding irrigation, hydraulics, soils and compaction. They just need to reconfigure it toward drip instead of spray heads.

What are the biggest challenges for contractors in selling and providing drip irrigation for lawns?

By far, the biggest challenges are getting customers to understand and trust the technology, as well as trust that their contractor has the credibility and experience to perform a successful install. But, when the customer understands the numerous benefits, it becomes a much easier sell for the contractor.

Most customers are used to the sight of sprinklers spraying water and they take comfort in knowing the turf is being watered, even though it is doing so in an inefficient manner and using more water than needed. Knowledgeable contractors will be able to explain how the water is moving evenly below the surface to keep the roots wet and healthy without wasting water, and dispel many of the common misconceptions about subsurface drip. Having the literature we provide and examples of other projects help close the sale.