

## **Doubling the pleasure in gardens fit for flowers, vegetables, hobbies and sports**

By Ann Wilson  
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From putting greens to playing courts to railroad gardens, some people are finding ways to cultivate fun and games among their flower beds, vegetables and lawn.

Take the garden of Michael Andersen on the city's South Side. The tetherball pole in the center of his garden serves more than one purpose. The hub of sporting action, the pole also is the axis upon which he laid out his circular garden made up of beds separated by flagstone and grass paths. The larger beds hold his food crops, which include alpine strawberries, everbearing raspberries, tomatoes, purple carrots, eggplants and Swiss chard. The smaller beds house easy-care perennials such as bergamot, lovage, common tansy and black-eyed Susan. On non-game days, the pole handily holds a sprinkler. Although an unusual choice for a garden focal point, the regulation 24-foot-diameter court is a plant-safe option, says Andersen.

"When you play, you have more space than you need," says Andersen, an industrial design teacher at the University of Illinois Chicago. "The ball won't go into the plants; no one flies into the garden because the action gets closer to the pole as the rope wraps around it. It's easy to set up too. When people come over for a pickup game, I just take down the sprinkler and put up the ball and rope."

Over at Tish and Jim Fitzpatrick's Hinsdale home, it's even easier to put a ball into play. The Fitzpatricks and their four kids merely cross the patio to the back-yard putting green, installed in June by Doug Steeves of Synthetic Turf of Illinois, based in Manteno.

With putters in hand, the Fitzpatricks hone their golfing skills as they tap the ball into one of three holes situated at varied elevations.

The green sits where once a towering evergreen stood. Last winter the tree died, and it was removed to make way for the green, which is used as a practice area for avid golfer Jim and a training ground for novice duffers, Tish and children, Shamus, 12, and Bridget, 14.

Surrounded by artificial grass, the synthetic putting green requires little maintenance, says Tish Fitzpatrick. Next spring, the couple will run a water-filled roller over the green and it will be ready for the golfing season.

The couple added shrubs and evergreen bushes to screen the green and filled a narrow border between patio and green with Veronica, nepeta, lady's mantle, coreopsis, Ozark sundrops, phlox and 'Amethyst' salvia; annuals such as 'Patriot Rainbow' lantana, wax begonias and red fountain grass supply seasonlong color.

The installation already has provided hours of fun. "It really gets a lot of use because it's right by the patio," says Fitzpatrick. "The children just pick up putters and start golfing. We practice our putting and have putting competitions. We're really enjoying it. Installing the putting green is the best thing we've ever done in the yard."