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Landscaper touts green options

Recycled products can trump wood

By Monica Wolfson, The Windsor Star



Having a "green" yard has little to do with the colour of the grass.

TV's premier eco-friendly landscape designer Carson Arthur was at Devonshire Mall Sunday afternoon advising residents on how they can improve outdoor living space by using recycled materials.

Instead of using wood, Arthur showed pictures of fences, decks and a gazebo made with Trax, a material that looks like wood but is made of recycled plastic bags.

It's twice as expensive as wood, but it lasts three times longer, is maintenance free and helps the environment.

"It doesn't fade, it doesn't rot," said Arthur, the host of HGTV's Green Force show. "When it's installed, it looks just like wood."

The company that manufactures Trax uses 1.5 billion plastic bags a year in its product.

Arthur also discussed petrified wood, which can be manufactured by burning garbage, Arthur said, adding that there were 10,000 landfills in Canada.

Arthur also showed his audience products made of crushed glass and rubber that can be a substitute for concrete and stone. IceStone is made from recycled glass, while Stone-Link is made from recycled glass ground into sand. Both products have the weight and appearance of stone.

"I feel better knowing my backyard is doing well for me and everyone else," Arthur said. "Flagstone is beautiful and expensive. There are alternatives to harvesting from the ground."

Modular stone interlocks like tiles, allows rain to flow into the ground and is cheaper than some of the more expensive natural stone products.

Mary Ann Max had planned to convert her large, corner house lawn to eco-friendly grass. She was slightly shocked when Arthur told her it needs a lot of care.

"I don't want to use chemicals and I have a lot of native plants. But I'm looking at less maintenance for my yard."

He told her to convert one patch of lawn to see how it worked and whether it was worth the effort.

Sam Pluzaric redid his yard himself 20 years ago. While he wasn't looking to renovate, he said Arthur's presentation was great because he learned a lot about materials that can be used in lieu of wood.