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Step out of the Sun: Six Tips to Consider Before Installing Shade Sails

Topiarius helps determine whether shade sails are right for your backyard

CHICAGO, June 11, 2013 – Sunny yards may catch the eye first, but shade offers a tranquil retreat for those who can't or don't want to be in the sun. While installing shade sails offers a practical and stylish alternative to traditional shade solutions, and generally offer much higher UV protection, it's important to consider whether or not they're a good fit for your backyard.

"Shade sails offer several practical benefits for people who spend a lot of time outdoors," said Sara Jenkins-Sutton, co-owner of [Topiarius](#), a Chicago-based leader of urban garden services. "But because it is a big, and sometimes costly, purchase, it is important to make sure a shade sails are right for you."

Here are six tips to consider before investing in shade sails:

1. **Seasonality.** Most shade sails are made with a permeable material so they are strong enough to withstand heavy rain and wind but not snow loads. Shade sails should be made with a durable material that can be easily set up, taken down, and reinstalled seasonally.
2. **Ground Level Installations.** There are two options for ground level installation: an attachment point that utilizes a point(s) on a building, such as a house or garage, or standalone installations, which includes in-ground 6 in. x 6 in. wood posts for smaller shade sizes or a 4-inch galvanized schedule 40 metal (steel) poles for large sizes and multiple shades.

When using attachments to a building, a structural engineer is recommended to calculate wind load of the shade sail to determine the proper method for attachment. This is needed because shade sails will generate enough wind loads that they are capable of pulling face brick off buildings. If using poles or posts, each one needs to be set in concrete and 50 percent of the height of the pole above ground is the length that needs to be below ground.

3. **Aboveground Installations.** When considering a sail for a roof deck, the attachment must be installed on a building or a structure such as a pergola. Keep in mind, however, a pergola's post needs to be attached securely to a permanent structure to prevent damage to walls during inclement weather.
4. **Varying Heights.** Shade sails attachment points should be at different heights for proper drainage of water. By installing the shade sails flat, the manufacturer's warranty becomes null and void.
5. **Readymade or Custom.** Pricing for the readymade shade sails is more reasonable but very rarely do the pre-made sizes fit in pre-existing spaces. Custom sizes can be ordered to exact dimensions and come in more styles and colors. Shade sails will last approximately 8-10 years or more with proper installation and care.
6. **Consider Costs.** When attachment points are easily available, the ambitious DIY-er can handle the installation. However when attachment points need to be calculated or constructed, a professional is required. A typical backyard patio will start at \$4,500 and will increase depending on size, complexity and attachment points. On an above ground installation, shade sail installation starts, on average, at around \$8,000.

To learn more about Topiarius, visit www.Topiarius.com, follow them on [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#), and like their page on [Facebook](#).

About Topiarius Urban Garden and Floral Design:

Founded in 2003, Chicago-based [Topiarius](#) offers the best in urban garden and floral décor services. Co-owned by Craig and Sara Jenkins-Sutton, Topiarius offers outdoor landscape design and care from the construction of hardscapes and planting of softscapes, to regular maintenance, urban farming, and exterior and interior seasonal decorating/planting. Topiarius also provides regularly scheduled floral arrangements and interior plant rotations. Their distinctive designs and professional installations are known for breathing new life into indoor and outdoor spaces. For more from Topiarius, follow them on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#), like their page on [Facebook](#).

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