

bottom of the trench typically are lined with a suitable drainage filter fabric. Normally a French drain does not include a pipe; however, the inclusion of a pipe makes this type of drainage system more efficient.

A subdrain is similar to a French drain but it does not extend to the surface and always includes a perforated pipe. In the construction of a subdrain, the trench is sometimes wrapped with a suitable drainage filter fabric. In some conditions, however, the use of a pre-wrapped perforated pipe might be preferred by the design professional. Some design professionals prefer to keep the drainage filter fabric as a material separator to keep the natural subgrade soils from the drainage stone only. In this case, the fabric is placed on the subgrade and the drainage pipe is free floating in the clean stone drainage trench.

A relatively new variation of both the French drain and the subdrain uses a geocomposite drainage material. This material facilitates the construction of subsurface drainage with a much smaller trench or profile. Geocomposite drainage material is available in various sizes, depending on the amount of water to be handled and the rate of flow desired. The geocomposite is inserted in the trench

where its unique shape allows for unobstructed water flow in a narrow trench. In some cases the design will incorporate a geocomposite or molded plastic drainage material directly under the synthetic turf or under a thin layer of drainage stone. In these two scenarios, the geocomposite is basically a substitute for a more substantial layer of drainage stone. The geocomposite is typically covered by a non-woven filter fabric to prevent soil and other small particles from clogging the drainage medium.

Another variation of the French drain, called a footing drain, is used behind a retaining wall or other structure where removal of ground water is prudent.

Any of these French drain or subdrain systems will terminate in a storm sewer connection or carry the water to an area of the site where it can be stored for reuse or dispersed in a responsible manner. These will be discussed in a subsequent article. ■

Mary Helen Sprecher wrote this article on behalf of the American Sports Builders Association. Available at no charge is a listing of all publications offered by the ASBA, as well as their Membership Directory. Call 866-501-2722 or see www.sportsbuilders.org.

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