SELL... INSTALL... MAINTAIN

It's not the easiest job in the world selling irrigation systems to commercial establishments in the East and Midwest. But it can be done, as this dealer's representative has found out.

by Jack Simonds, contributing editor

The assignment: Market irrigation systems in an area which usually enjoys a robust mixture of sunshine and rainfall. The added challenge: A good moisture-retaining clay soil also is common throughout northeast Ohio.

It isn't the easiest way to go for George Reese, director of irrigation sales at North Coast Distributors. But he hasn't done badly on his 22-county beat. Not for an area where commercial and residential irrigation systems are sometimes considered a "prestige" item in new constructions.

"When I started 15 years ago, irrigation was not exactly a household word," remembers Reese. "This is a tough market to sell. Irrigation is not considered a 100 percent necessity item here when compared with other states in the South and West.

"It has been a very difficult road. What you sell is a concept, and the timing has to be right," says Reese on a warm, moist spring day where every planting in sight is lush and green. "You're not handed anything in this market. You have to hard work at it," he says.

Many projects are already under his belt and others on the way. But none is likely to compare with Reese's largest ongoing design job: equipping Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.'s world headquarters in Akron, Ohio with as much irrigation as needed on 400 of the firm's 600 city acres.

Underground obstacles
Reese works closely with Goodyear's grounds maintenance manager Tom Riccardi, a veteran green industry...
Tom Riccardi: maintain quality control.

Sloping green acreage alongside the Goodyear Technical Center headquarters is well-irrigated. The reclaimed area once sported coal piles and unused rail tracks.