JOBTALK

Getting a lock on lawn edging

to do a fair amount of work to prepare for edging installation. But a versatile new edging product developed by the plastics division of Eberhart Steel Products Corp., could take much of that hassle out of installation.

The product, called Edge Lock, is an interlocking system that eliminates the need for stakes and can be installed by one person.

The system requires no trenches or connectors and can be bent to form a square seven inches in diameter. According to the company, Edge Lock can form a circle 14 inches in diameter without bending because the interlocking pieces swivel.

Plastics division head Larry Eberhart says the product "is absolutely revolutionary as far as edging is concerned. There's really nothing this product will not do."

Forty interlocking pieces connect to make a 20-foot section, but come in a box as small as 11x5x7 inches. Each interlocking piece is $6^1/2$ inches wide and comes in heights of $4^3/4$, $5^3/4$ and $6^3/4$. Using varied sizes, Edge Lock can be stacked so as to form a barrier of just about any specified height. Since it is available in black, ivory or green, the system also can be used to add color to landscape designs.

Edge Lock, constructed of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), is designed with a "bulb" on one end and a hollow "C" on the other (see figure A). Installation is as simple as sliding the hollow "C" of one piece over the bulb of another and tapping it into the soil (see figure B). A rubber mallet is recommended because a metal hammer may damage the edging. Each piece is .10 inches wide at the wall, .281 inches wide at the bulb.

Because the product is constructed of the PVC, a relatively expensive plastic, Eberhart doesn't expect an immediate profit from Edge Lock's sale. But because of the company's size, he explains,

Edge Lock in use.

"We have the staying power and stability to wait five years."

The company began selling the product last November and has thus far sold on a limited, test basis. People will call up and ask for 100-foot sections for testing, Eberhart says.

He adds that the product, which took six months to develop, is in partial distribution now, but he expects nationwide distribution by the end of the year. "I didn't want distributors at first because of the price structure," Eberhart explains. He found that prices would vary too much from distributor to distributor.

However, associates advised him to look around for distributors who would work in the same price structure. He has found some and is currently working out arrangments with them. He estimates it will take 50 to 60 distributors for an effective national network. The company will market Edge Lock to landscapers only, he adds.

Response to Edge Lock has been overwhelming, Eberhart says. Although distribution will be limited much of this year, he still expects to sell at least three to five million feet of the product in 1987. The division has

only recently expanded its production facilities and can now produce 150,000 feet of the product a day.

Eberhart is so confident that his product will do well, he boasts, "We will be the biggest edging manufacturer in the country in two years. I guarantee it."

The company has supported the release of the product by spending an average of $9,000 a month on advertising. The distributors, Eberhart says, like having this kind of support. "We're taking care of our distributors," he adds.

The product is patent pending, and Eberhart doesn't expect to receive the patent for at least another year or two. But, he says, this may work to the company's advantage. "No one will try infringing on our product because no one knows what the patent office will give us."

Early "copies," he says, could lead to patent infringement law suits. After the patent is awarded, other companies will be able to develop products outside of the patent. But for now, Eberhart's plastic division will take advantage of the solo status and lock up as big a market share as possible. **WT&T**

FIGURE A

Hollow "C" Side

Solid "bulb" Side

FIGURE B

Hollow "C" flange

Impact area for rubber mallet

Solid "bulb" flange