

# Gadget makes yard work easier

By PAM GIBBENS  
Greater Houston Weekly

The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. Especially Bill Ball's grass, watered with an innovative, in-ground, sprinkler system.

The resident of Bellaire has a thick, carpet of green grass, thanks to the Watering Made Easy Sprinkler System.

"I bought the system three seasons ago," Ball began. "My grass is definitely greener and it's easy to water now. The system is much more cost effective than underground sprinkler systems. I compared both kinds of systems and I know I've saved thousands of dollars. It's also easy to install. I don't have to drag a sprinkler around the yard anymore. I've saved time too. It takes two seconds to hook it up and water the entire yard. When you're through, the sprinkler head pops back down into the ground and you can mow over it."

Heading north on Hwy 59, Kingwood resident Eric Eden's lawn is lush too. But these days, Eden, the inventor of the first in-ground permanent watering system, is too busy selling his sprinkler to notice.

Everything's coming up roses for the former Enron computer and design technician turned entrepreneur. While demonstrating his product at a national hardware show in Las Vegas, Eden was thrilled when representatives from QVC, the national home shopping channel, were interested in his product.

"They really liked my sprinkler system and asked me to demonstrate it on the show," said Eden. "I met with their sales representative who helped me design my presentation."

After rehearsing for the live demonstration, Eden was ready for his debut on television. In mere minutes, Eden sold all 1,800 sprinklers. And, he's appearing on QVC again in June — this time armed with a few thousand more sprinklers.

"We just finished building 5,000 new sprinklers. We're barely keeping up with the demand," said Eden. "We plan to ship them out this week. I'll probably be on QVC around the



Kingwood resident Eric Eden is all smiles since his Watering Made Easy Sprinkler System was introduced on QVC, the home shopping channel. Eden sold 1,800 sprinklers within a few minutes. He's heading back to QVC with 5,000 more. Photo by Pam Gibbens

week of June 20."

As his job as an AutoCad specialist with Enron began to whither, Eden started sketching out a design for the sprinkler system. The first basic model was constructed in 1998. Eden's innovation eventually became a grassroots, neighborhood project, involving friends and family.

"We'd have sprinkler parties in my garage," Eden said. "We built 75 to 100 sprinklers in about two months."

On April 8, 2002, the Watering Made Easy Company

was formed. Eden trademarked his invention in 2003 and immediately began distributing the product across the country.

To market his sprinkler, Eden teamed with Handy Hardware, a wholesale company, to gain access to 1,200 Ace Hardware stores in nine states. He worked day and night pitching his invention to other companies that were initially unimpressed.

"I got 'no thank you' letters from Lowes and QVC at first," said Eden. "But then I was able to convince one renegade

Lowes store to carry my sprinkler. One of the managers broke the rules. I told him I didn't care if I ever got paid, just try to sell the product. Since then, 350 Lowes stores are selling them. From the beginning, it hasn't been if this would take off...it's been when."

Today, Eden's invention can be found at most Lowes stores, many Wal-Mart locations, hardware stores and farm and nursery supply stores.

Eden is the first to commercially market this pipeless, inexpensive, permanent watering system for the growing market of "do-it-yourselfers."

"Lawn sprinklers must distribute the water evenly across the lawn, but not all sprinklers are up to the task," said Eden. "Many do not distribute water evenly and leave spots dry, while flooding others. We've all set up a garden hose and sprinkler only to forget it's running and wake up the next morning to a flooded lawn. I got tired of babysitting my lawn and clowning around with surface sprinklers. I came up with the Watering Made Easy system to save me time and money."

Eden explained that homeowners can effortlessly insert the below ground station in a small hole in the yard. Within minutes, a person can quickly snap on a garden hose to the connector that supplies the water to the area. Water pressure causes the sprinkler head to pop up out of the ground. When the watering stops, the device disappears underground and allows mowers to safely pass over the top of the station.

There are three styles of stations available to accommodate watering areas of different shapes and sizes and can be controlled by a water timer. The original sprinkler station sprays a 35 foot radius and the smaller version covers a 15 foot radius.

Despite his success, the hard-working entrepreneur says he has a long way to go before saturating the sprinkler market.

"I'd like to lock in another big customer," he said. "I've got my eyes set on Home Depot."

For more information, call 832-527-4005 or visit [www.wateringmadeeasy.com](http://www.wateringmadeeasy.com)