

“Mostly Successful Stale Seed Bedding”

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The Take Home Message:

Stale seed bedding is extremely successful if the beds are prepared 4-6 weeks in advance and are weeded using a tine weeder every 5-7 days. Weed pressure is greatly reduced. Hand weeding and hoeing costs are greatly reduced or eliminated altogether. Weeds need to be eliminated in the thread stage before their roots have the opportunity to develop.

The Tools:

1. A 45 inch Williams Spring Tine Rake with gauge wheels and a belly mounted Budding Basket Weeder.
2. A 7 foot Lely Weeder with gauge wheels
3. Flame Weeder: We have a small walk behind tool we do not use.

The Crops:

Greens, Root Crops, Peas, Beans, Corn, Winter Squash, Pumpkins,

The Parameters:

It is preferable if the field is stone free, with minimal crop debris and well drained. We prefer oats which winter kill to winter rye in order to get on the field early. Often, we mow the oats in the fall.

The Procedure:

1. Prepare beds immediately in the spring including subsoiling or chisel plowing. Prepare them as far in advance as possible, a minimum of 3 weeks, preferably 6-8 weeks for successive seedings or plantings.
2. Raking the beds every 4-5 days is best, weekly at a minimum. Tractor speeds of 5 mph and higher are preferred.
3. Do not be deterred by rain. Jump on the field as soon as they drain. Ideally, there is a dedicated tractor for this purpose.

Concerns:

1. A prolonged period of rain can result in having to prepare the beds a second time.
2. There is a harvest risk. Namely, the weeds can get ahead of you after seeding. Therefore, we increase the amount we grow to account for losses due to weed issues.

The Results:

Weed pressure varied greatly from field to field and the time of the year. Some beds were virtually weed free, requiring little to no weeding or hoeing. Others did not look much different from our standard routine of preparing beds just before seeding or planting. The critical factor is to keep on a routine of tine weeding every 5-7 days.