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OPERATING MANUAL for RB448 and RB436 RAISED BED PLASTIC MULCH LAYERS

INTRODUCTION

Nolt model RB448 and RB436 machines are designed to make crowned, raised beds and to lay plastic mulch and irrigation drip tape in one pass. These machines can also make a raised bed only (the rear cover disks can be removed for this application). The soil should be well tilled to at least 5" deep to make a full, firm bed.

A sizable tractor with sway bars on the 3-point hitch is needed for safety, stability, and lifting power, and to keep unit going straight. When the tractor steers or drifts to one side or side drafts, the rear cover disks will tend to move off the mulch resulting in poor coverage of the edges. The minimum size of tractor for model RB436 is 25 hp. For model RB448, the minimum is 30 hp.

Two or more workers are needed -- to operate the tractor, secure the mulch and drip tape at the beginning of the beds, make sure edges of the mulch are being covered correctly, etc.

WARRANTY

RB448 and RB436 mulch layers have a full two year warranty against defects and workmanship. If any part is thought to be defective, return it to the manufacturer (Nolt) with the Serial Number of the mulch layer. If they find the part is defective, it will be replaced at no charge. Nolt's Telephone # is 641 228-4496; their Fax # is 641 228-4258.

SAFETY FIRST

- *Allow time to be safe.
- *Keep children away at all times.
- *Be careful when turning around; the layers are about 6` long.
- *Do not crawl under the machine to get the drip tape or the mulch.
- *Do not stand on the machine when it is moving.
- *Do not adjust the machine when it is moving.
- *Keep hands clear from rotating parts.
- *Make the tractor operator responsible for all workers around the machine.

BASICS OF OPERATION

Before laying mulch and drip tape, get the feel of the machine by just making beds. Changing the length of the tractor's 3-point top link changes the bed height; shortening the top link will make a higher bed.

Set the tractor's draft control to pull just enough soil to fill the bed. Pulling too much soil may cause side drafting.

To get fuller, firmer beds (particularly with a smaller tractor, in tighter soil, and when making higher beds), first make beds without laying mulch and drip tape. Then make another pass laying the mulch and drip tape. The rear cover disks can be removed when making beds only.

Lay a roll of good quality mulch that resists straight line tear on the rollers on top of the machine. Feed the end of the mulch straight down between the rollers and under the bottom roller and the press wheels.

Adjust the tension break on the top rollers (located on the right side when standing behind the layer) to stretch the mulch along the length of the bed. Too much tension will make the press wheels have a tendency to come off the mulch. Too much tension will also cause stretch lines in the mulch.

Adjust the angle of the press wheels to stretch the mulch across the bed; make in or out adjustment as needed. The press wheels need to run at the bottom of the sides of the bed, not up, on the sides of the bed.

Set the cover disks on a 45 degree angle. Make spring tension, depth, and in or out adjustment as needed for more or less coverage.

If also laying irrigation drip tape, pull the end of the drip tape out from under the machine before starting a bed. When starting the machine, have someone stand on or otherwise restrain the mulch and drip tape to avoid pulling them along with the machine.

CHANGING THE PLASTIC WIDTH

Model RB448 will lay 3' and 4' wide mulch. To change the width of the layer, loosen the bolts at the front of bed shapers and remove the bolts on top of bed shapers. Slide the shapers to the appropriate setting. Re-place and tighten the bolts.

Adjust the roll holders, rear cover disks, and press wheels as needed. In adjusting the press wheels, remove them by their arms and switch their locations.

INSTALLING IRRIGATION DRIP TAPE

Installing drip tape is the same on model RB448 and RB436 machines. Both layers accept single and double roll carriers. Double roll carriers allow placement of two drip tapes per bed or placement of the drip tape on the same side of all beds, e.g., the up-hill side.

Slide a roll of drip tape onto the roll carrier and lock it in place between the two metal plates with the 'T' handle clamp. While drip tape will work with either side up, place the roll onto the carrier so the outlets will be up; this may minimize clogging. Feed the drip tape through the guide ring and through the down spout. Adjust the down spout so the drip tape will be at least one inch in the soil; this will hold the drip tape in place and keep it from being damaged by the bed press.

The drip tape roll carrier has a tension brake; tighten the bolt to desired tension, just enough to prevent the drip tape from continuing to unroll as the tractor comes to a halt. Do not over tighten the brake. Cut the drip tape about one foot longer than bed/mulch on both ends of the bed. Close the ends of drip tape to keep soil out.

TROUBLE SHOOTING

PROBLEM: The mulch layer tends to drift sideways causing the press wheels to come off the mulch.

SOLUTION: Pull less soil; pull just enough to fill the bed completely/firmly. Adjust (lengthen) the 3-point top link. Make sure the sway bar is in place. Use a larger tractor.

PROBLEM: Press wheels come off the plastic mulch.

SOLUTION: Decrease the tension on roll carrier. Set the press wheels closer to the bed.

PROBLEM: The cover disks don't get enough soil to cover edges of the mulch.

SOLUTION: Set the disks to move more soil. Till the soil deeper/looser. Adjust (lengthen) the 3-point top link.

PROBLEM: Bed has pot holes (too little soil).

SOLUTION: Tractor's 3-point not low enough or draft control lifting up too much; shorten top Link. Soil not tilled deep enough. Set the scrapers deeper and/or, for RB448 only, at a greater angle. Use ***optional*** center bed fillers to move more soil to the center of the bed. Add extra weight (with drip tape and mulch rolls).