

WEEDING STAND FOR PLANT NURSERIES

PROBLEM:

Newly propagated plants are often kept in plastic flats on the ground for initial growth before “potting”. Workers must bend forward in a full-body “stooped” position to weed plants. This prolonged stooped posture can contribute to chronic low back injury.



- Worker must stoop and stay in bent position to weed trays on ground.
- Prolonged forward stoop contributes to low back injury risk.
- Worker fatigue and pain can lead to lower work quality.

ONE SOLUTION:

Use a movable table to elevate trays while weeding.



- Worker can stand while weeding, relieving prolonged stress on back.
- Worker must still bend to pick up and replace trays, but change of position is better than prolonged stoop.
- Tray is closer to worker reducing strain from reaching.
- Strain reduction improves quality of worker performance.

WHY BOTHER WITH A TABLE?

You can help prevent chronic back injuries among weeders and you should see improved work quality.

WON'T MOVING THE TABLE SLOW THE WORKER DOWN?

Probably not, if you calculate productivity over the work shift. Use of the table may result in slightly slower progress while workers are fresh. By mid-day, however, when back fatigue is setting in, workers with the table will be less tired and likely to move faster.

SHOULD I MAKE OR BUY A TABLE?

Either approach is fine provided that the table is the right size to fit the workers. As pictured, the ideal table will give the worker a platform for the trays at just above waist height. It should be light enough to move easily, but sturdy enough to be stable in use. A collapsible 4-wheeled table is available ready-made for \$227.99 from Materials Handling Equipment, 7433 US 30 East, Ft Wayne, IN 46803. 219-749-0475. It is 24" long x 19-3/4" wide x 30" high.

WHAT IF WEEDING FLATS IS ONLY A PART-TIME JOB IN MY NURSERY?

The weeding table is still a good investment. Lots of nursery tasks involve stooped posture. Relief, even in a part-time job, will help prevent long-term injury and will improve worker performance.

HOW TO MAKE A WEEDING TABLE

A weeding table can be made with simple materials available either in your facility's shop or at a local hardware store. The recommended material is light-duty steel, which will hold up under wet conditions, will not be too heavy to move around, and can be welded with typical shop equipment.

The drawing below shows 3/4"x3/4"x1/8" angle iron used for the table's legs, bottom bracing, and top bracing. The tabletop could be a piece of metal grating welded to the frame in a number of spots or a metal plate welded or bolted to the top. Two of the legs could be shortened and fitted with a steel rod, two lawnmower wheels, and push-on retaining caps, all of which are typically available at the hardware store. Cost for materials would be about \$25.

