

LAWN & GARDEN

Getting More Out of Garden Tillers

Offering customers a few gardening tips can help them use rental equipment more successfully and lead to repeat business.

By Mike Smollock

The garden tiller is one of the most popular and widely used rental tools. But as with most lawn and garden products, there is a relatively short window of rental opportunity. The trick is to rent tillers as many times as possible during this window and ensure that customers are successful in their gardening projects.

Not only can your counter staff instruct your customers on the proper use of lawn and garden equipment, but a few words of gardening advice can help them use the equipment more successfully.

A healthy, productive plant begins with a good root system, which is the result of a well-prepared and -maintained seed bed. A good seed bed will easily absorb air and moisture. Not preparing the bed properly is where the average gardener fails by making one of two mistakes:

- In the beginning, the seed bed is not made at least 8 inches deep.
- Maintenance and additional plowings are not completed as necessary. For a plant to reach maximum productivity, its root system must have room to expand. Therefore, additional plowings, which throw loose soil



to the base of the plant, are critical to the plant's survival. Therefore, additional plowings need to be done regularly in order to throw loose soil to the base of the plant.

These additional plowings serve other purposes, including:

- Covering weeds and grass in the row that rob the plant of food and moisture.

- Conditioning the soil in and between the rows so that it will more easily absorb water.

- Causing moisture to rise, which is very important in extremely dry conditions.

Using the following six preparatory and plowing steps, your rental customers can produce results like a professional:

Breaking ground

Use a tiller equipped with bolo tines or slasher tines and cut up the soil about 8 to 10 inches deep. When finished, if the soil is not pulverized and thoroughly broken, go over the entire bed with finger tines. Finger tines are also used to remove tilled grass from soil.

Laying off rows

Install finger tines on the tiller. Remove the skid bar and install a plow bar equipped with an 8-inch plow. Now lay off rows. Next, place

the best fertilizer for the area in the furrow. Remove the two outside tines, plow bar and plow, and reinstall the skid bar. Put the tiller in the furrow and cover the fertilizer to ensure that the seed does not come into contact with raw fertilizer.

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