

Standard Operating Procedure Mulch Applicator

Mulch Applicator

Hazards present:

Operation of the mulch applicator may pose a danger of, but not limited to:

- ! Machine driving over feet, hands, etc.
- ! Fingers, toes, etc. getting pinched or cut
- ! Straining of one's back
- ! Catching loose clothing in moving parts
- ! Heat stroke
- ! Being ejected from the seat if the applicator strikes a solid object in the ground

Safety equipment required:

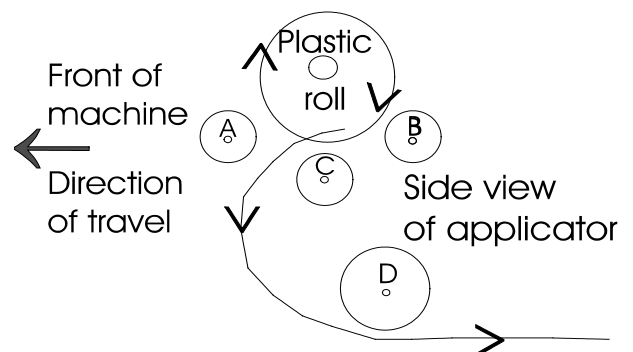
- Gloves
- Appropriate footwear such as work boots or hiking boots with good ankle support
- First aid kit
- Steel-toed boots
- Proper clothing for weather conditions

On-site preparation and maintenance:

- soil should be well worked, loose and free of sod lumps and large stones
- if possible, planting furrows should be smoothed leaving a level surface for applying the mulch
- check for loose or worn bearing on the discs
- grease machine

Operating procedure while in field:

1. Before removing pin from transport vehicle, be sure jack is secure and on solid ground, safety chains are unhooked, light connections are uncoupled and removed.
2. Once hooked to the field tractor, connect the hydraulics. Then remove/disable the transport arms/locks. Do this by neutralizing the hydraulics. This will take the pressure off the pins. Remove the pins and drop the arms into their free position. *****Failure to remove/disable the transport arms can result in injury to persons and damage to the machine.***** Only on the three point hitch models are the arms used to raise or lower the applicator. When hooking the mulch applicator to a tractor be sure to exercise caution not to pinch a person between the tractor and the applicator.
3. Be sure tractor operator is alert and able to hear you if you have to shout any commands, if not a third person may be required to relay signals. Proceed to tree row aligning the tractor and applicator to straddle the tree row.
4. Place a roll of plastic mulch on the "cradle" of rollers on the mulch applicator, being careful not to strain your back or pinch your finger between the plastic roll and applicator. Unroll a length of plastic going between the small front roller (A) and small bottom roller (C). Continue to pull the plastic so that it is under the back roller (D) and toward the rear of the applicator.



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5. When lowering into application mode, keep all body parts clear of coulters. Height of the rear discs is determined by lengthening or shortening the attached turnbuckles. The front discs are controlled by the hydraulics. Make sure that they only go 3" deep. The rear disks should bring in the most soil.
6. Height adjustments must be made to the rear discs to ensure that they bring in enough soil to hold down the edges of the mulch. Do not attempt to make adjustments to the applicator while it is in motion.
7. Before the tractor is in motion, one person should be securely seated in the chair on the applicator. Keep feet and loose clothing clear of all moving parts.
8. As the tractor and applicator proceed straddling the tree row, the person riding the applicator makes a small slit or mark in the plastic mulch at the base of the seedling as it passes below him/her. The person riding the applicator must handle the knife for cutting the plastic in a manner not to harm ones self or others around. Those following behind to pull the seedlings through the plastic should make the cut lengthwise and keep the cut as small as possible. Pull the seedlings through the plastic as quickly and gently as possible. Keep off the plastic as much as possible to prevent damage.
9. At the end of each row stop, cut the plastic, and get off the applicator before raising the applicator and proceeding to the next row. Immediately trench in and cover the open end of the mulch to ensure that the wind is not able to get under the mulch. Make sure the edges of the plastic are secure and covered with soil. Carefully running a truck tire along the edge of the secured plastic will help stabilize the edges.

OPERATING PROCEDURE ON ROAD:

1. Before unhooking from the field tractor be sure the hydraulics are raised into transport mode and the safety locks/arms are in place and fastened.
2. Unless there is a transport clearance problem (e.g. very rough roads) do not adjust turnbuckles. Once machine is set for field use, do not adjust. If available, make sure lock nuts are secure and remove remaining plastic mulch from the cradle.
3. When hooking to the tow vehicle, be sure to fasten safety chains and pins, mount the appropriate lighting if available and check their operation.

Training required:

All employees must **be given** training/instructions on the use of the mulch applicator by an experienced operator.