

Workshop Title: Equipping for Efficiency

Speaker & their title: Tim Livingstone, Strawberry Hill Farm (NB)

Executive Summary:

This workshop contained a slideshow of many different equipment options. Tim discussed not only the options, but also how to choose where to spend your limited funds, whether by buying, leasing, renting, or borrowing equipment and farm gear.

Detailed Notes:

It's important to consider why we use equipment. Aim to employ equipment to ease pinch-points – where labour is stretched thin. You need to consider the long-term goals for the farm, and you need to be clear about the basic scale and system you want to have in the future – this will determine much of your decision-making about equipment.

Tim recommends allocating 10% of gross sales to equipment & other capital improvements. (You need to make sure that the net worth of the business is always going up, which is to say that you want the value of your assets to be more than your debt.)

The question is, how do you spend that 10%? Consider comparing the money you will spend to the money you will save. For Tim, this meant that his tunnel paid for itself in one year, and his bed shaper & mulch layer pay for themselves each year. Think about how much you are going to use the piece of equipment - perhaps you could or should just borrow, rather than buy, or maybe you could rent. Consider these options especially for equipment that you will rarely use. If buying, perhaps go with something newer if there are lots of moving parts.

This workshop examined many slides of different pieces of equipment and gear (some of which Tim owns, and some of which he does not) including:

- Mulch layer, which is a huge time-saver for Tim but took three years to learn to operate properly
- Jang seeder, which makes thinning unnecessary, even for unpelleted carrots
- Waterwheel transplanter, which gives perfect spacing between rows, and which Tim uses for direct seeding winter squash
- Echo weeder, which Tim doesn't like because he thinks that two people with wheelhoes can do as much as the Echo weeder
- Wooden pallet bins, which are good for large quantities of storage crops – especially squash or large sized crops
- Set of S-tines with 6-7 inch sweeps that do a great job throwing soil
- Clear biotelo, which he uses for lettuce and early cole crops
- \$600 vacuum seeder for seedlings, which is good for small seeds but doesn't work for large seeds

**2014 ACORN Conference
Halifax Harbourfront Marriott Hotel, NS**

- Wooden, locally-made barrel washer, which he uses not only for root crops but also for salad mix and spinach by having it on super-slow 5 minutes on and 3 minutes off such that no spinning is required
- Rotovator for bed prep and incorporating crop residues
- Manure spreader, which he rents
- Vibra-shank cultivator, which he uses a lot but is not good for vine crop residue