

# Equipment for Salad Green's and Herbs

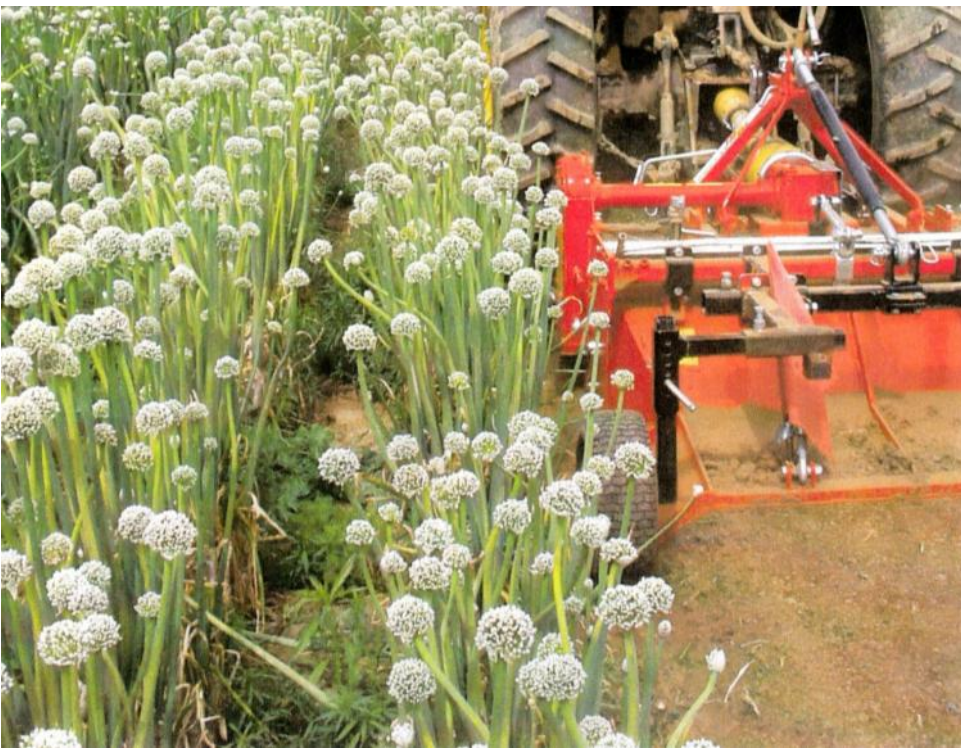
For the grower of salad greens, culinary herbs and medicinal herbs who wishes to grow on a scale larger than the kitchen garden, it is necessary to mechanize in order to keep labor inputs manageable and the enterprise profitable. The competition is industrialized agriculture that relies on the advantages of immense scale, intense marketing, elaborate distribution systems, and the endless availability of serfs working at near slave wages.

The small to intermediate size grower has been at a disadvantage until recently because the specialized equipment needed was too large and expensive for them. However in recent years that situation has changed and extremely effective small scale machines have become available for smaller farms and are cost effective making small enterprises competitive.



**Bed Shapers:** Tilling, listing up and raking out debris are time consuming bed preparation steps that can be done better by a powered bed shaper. Several European manufacturers produce PTO driven bed shapers with built in stone burriers. Even without stones these machines

clean up the bed by burying clods, root clumps, and vegetable residue leaving clean fine soil on top of the bed ready to receive the fine closely spaced seeds of salad greens and/or herbs. These bed



shapers in a single pass with or without rollers create an ideal surface to permit precision seeding. The shapers range from models that make a 35" bed top and wider and range in cost from \$13,000 to \$28,000 with power roller as of this writing (6/1/10).



growers had a major advantage because they could rationalize use of pneumatic planters that give extremely precise seed placement albeit at very high initial cost.



A more precise seeder that permits control of seed interval in the row as well as between the rows. This self propelled 1 meter wide unit is ideal for seeding in a tunnel system as well in open field. Some 20 seed wheels are drilled to accommodate the smallest seed up to the size of sweet corn. Price about \$15,000 (6/1/10)

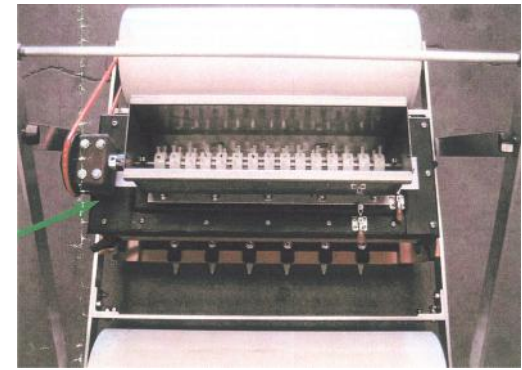
Another option is self propelled SM2000 "Seed Spyder" type seeder for high density seeding without the in row control of interval. This type allows fast seed type changes and tolerates great varia-



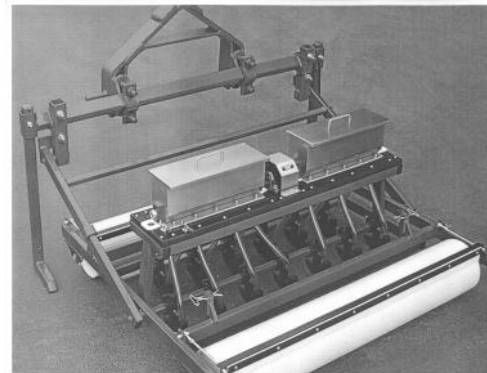
tions in seed sizes within a seed variety.

The seed spyder can be had in a 3pt. Mounted version allowing wide mass plantings.

Today even small growers can use a custom made push seeder that does 24" wide swath at cost of



Inside seed box rotating brushes sweep seed into opener.



about \$2,900 (6/1/10) or a 3pt mount version to do a 45" bed top for about \$6500 (6/1/10). These represent a big improvement over the push seeder most commonly used by small scale growers but still are not very precise.

**Greens harvesters:** The invention of the "band saw" cutting head just a few years ago in Italy revolutionized mechanical greens harvesting. This simple idea resulted

in large trailed harvesters costing around \$26,000 and self propelled models from \$45,000—\$200,000 becoming common in the Salinas Valley of California and other places. The largest growers can amortized the cost of one of these machines in a matter of weeks with the labor savings alone, in spite of this fact the majority salad mixes sold in USA are still cut by hand by an army of extremely low paid workers, allowing large producers to under cut prices.



3 pt mount 48" cut \$15,000

Fortunately the smaller grower now has access to a small scale greens harvester to keep labor demands low and to actually produce a higher quality product. It's unusual for a machine harvester to do better than hand work. With greens the band saw's cleaner cut and the elimination of bruising from holding greens bunches during cutting allows the Ortomec to produce products superior



48" self propelled \$32,000

in crispness and with a longer shelf life.

**Sanitation:** The fewer the number of people who come in contact with the crop and the less times the crop is touched, the easier it is to keep crop free of contamination. The use of stainless steel and food grade plastics allow harvester to be pressure washed and sanitized as needed. It is necessary to see to it that totes are washed and sanitized inside and out to retain the harvesters advantage in this regard.