

## Production

Finding the right equipment to eliminate clods from the soil helps a Colorado grower increase onion yields.

# Forming Proper Seedbeds

Photo credit: Ryan Lewis



A reverse-till bed former from Northwest Tillers pulverizes the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches, providing a better environment for seed to get established. The end result is the production of a healthy crop, such as the onions shown here.

**Z**ACH Mason has grown onions most of his life. Working on the family farm in Fowler, CO, Mason learned his trade from his father and grandfather as a teenager.

When he was a young man, he started producing a small plots of onions on his own. Years later, he is growing about 1,200 acres of onions for the fresh and process markets along with beans, corn, and wheat, rounding out his acreage at 3,500.

One of the challenges Mason faces is with clods in the heavy loam soil found in Colorado. As loam soil hardens like concrete without moisture, yields can be limited if seedbeds aren't properly formed.

It was a tip from seed dealer, Ryan Lewis of Keithly Williams Seed, that helped Mason work through his issues with clods to create a better seedbed for his crops. Lewis suggested Mason use a reverse-till bed former from Northwest Tillers. The bed former pulverizes the soil a depth of about 6 or 8 inches, which Lewis says provides a better environment for the seed to get established.

"Having a well-prepared bed gives seeds — especially small-seed crops like onions, carrots, radishes, etc.— the best chance to grow," adds Lewis.

After using the equipment, Mason says his onion yields increased, and he got faster seed germination, better rooted onions, and larger bud size. "[The equipment] completely breaks up the clods to make a fine seed bed," he says.

In addition, Mason says the equipment replaced a significant amount of soil preparation, eliminating six to eight passes over the field. "The cost of running several separate machines — plus the ever-rising price of fuel — makes

that a big money-saver," he concludes. "And eliminating those extra passes with other equipment also saves time and labor expenses."

**AVG**

*Information for this article was provided by Ryan Lewis of Keithly Williams Seed Co.*