

PURPOSE: Bedding is a site preparation method used to increase survival and growth of tree seedlings on wet soils and soils prone to flooding. This technique involves construction of parallel beds and furrows from surrounding soil. Seedlings planted on top of the beds benefit from a concentration of nutrients and organic matter. A shear, rake, and pile operation usually precedes bedding in cutover timber. In areas with hardwood competition, an added benefit is the uprooting and exposing of root systems allowing for some hardwood control. Bed heights slowly recede over time.



EQUIPMENT: Use a bulldozer of D-6 size or larger and a bedding machine capable creating a bed 18 inches deep x 30 inches wide. In a clean field, a farm tractor and bottom plow may be used to build smaller, less uniform beds.

SPECIFICATIONS: Depending on species to be planted, beds are usually placed on 9-12 foot centers. Align beds to channel water toward natural drain areas. Water should not have to cross the top of the beds. Beds should not alter the flow, circulation, or reach of water to the degree that a wetland is converted into upland.

Bedding is usually done in late summer or early fall. At least 6 inches of rain should fall on beds before planting to help settle air pockets in beds. Bed height receding will be noticeable for at least 6 months after the bedding operation.

It is generally necessary to hand plant beds. Plant good quality containerized seedlings if beds have a high sandy soil composition or if the soil is expected to be dry for an extended period after planting.

It is often necessary to perform a post-planting herbicide spray in the spring if excessive grass, vines, or weeds begin to cover the tops of the beds. On most wet sites where bedding is prescribed, initial seedling survival and subsequent timber growth and yield will more than make up for initial bedding costs.

Photo Credit: John D. Hodges, Mississippi State University, www.forestryimages.org



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission
For more information please visit: www.forestry.alabama.gov