

Packing shed layout

Packing produce in an unsystematic manner wastes time, effort, and may lower produce quality. You can save time and money by designing a well organized, clear, step-by-step flow for tasks and products in your packing area.

Why analyze my packing shed layout?

You may be able to reduce your packing time by slightly changing your current routine or habits. Diagramming your layout will make it easier to identify areas where the flow of activity could be streamlined.

Will rearranging my packing area save me money?

Any time saved during produce packing will save money. Indirect savings come from creating a more comfortable work area that will be healthier and less hazardous for you and your workers. If your produce moves

quickly through the packing process it will maintain higher quality and be fresher when packed.

How can I analyze my packing area?

On paper, diagram the flow of your product from field to packing box to cooler or truck, and note the workstations. Have an outsider describe the flow so you don't overlook any details you might take for granted. Videotaping the packing process may also help to reveal inefficient steps.

What are some considerations for efficient layout?

- Consider the general "flow" of the produce you will be handling. Try to create a step-by-step task line that doesn't waste effort. For example, do all of your crops need to be washed?

WORK EFFICIENCY

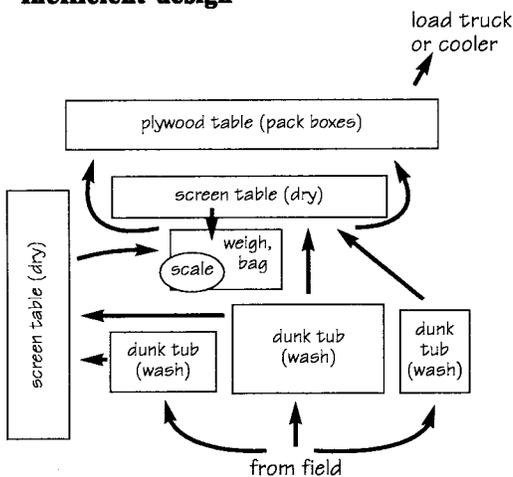


Tip Sheet

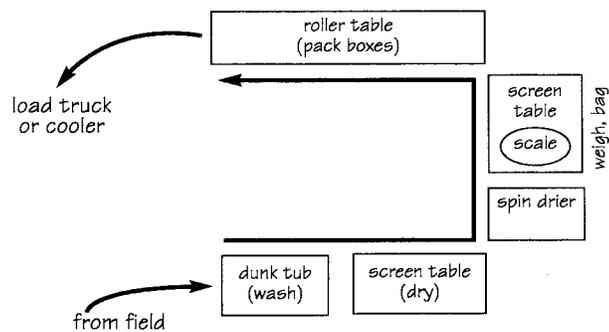
A series of tip sheets on labor efficiency for fresh-market vegetable growers.

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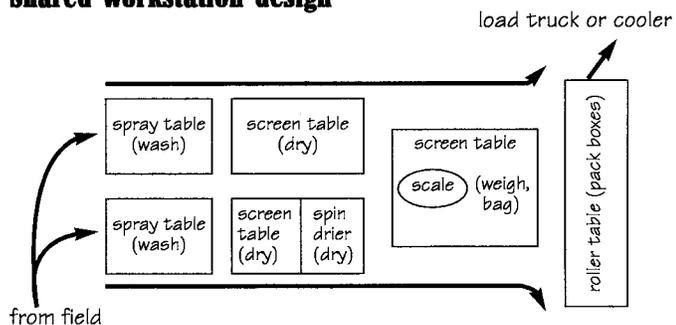
Inefficient design



U-shaped design



Shared workstation design



- Do some need to be spray washed and others dunked? Do you need both water and electricity at some workstations but not others? Could you run two task lines into a shared workstation that has water and electricity? Could you make side-by-side task lines that intersect at a shared workstation where boxes are packed, for example? Or circular task lines that intersect at the shared workstation? Could you use some sections of roller table?
- Is there a clear, uncluttered path for product and workers to follow?
- Is your space large enough for your packing needs
- Is there plenty of light?
- Is the floor level and smooth to allow you to use wheeled carts or hand trucks? A concrete floor is most effective, followed by asphalt and packed road base gravel. Dirt or wood chips hold water and are unsanitary. With a smooth floor you can set up a pallet system with narrow pallets and a hand truck, or full size pallets and a hydraulic pallet jack.
- Do you have enough water to frequently change wash water? Do wash water tubs drain away from the work area or must they be carried and tipped to empty? Could you use a splash guard or collecting trough under a screen table? Do you have a hand-washing station?

- Are work surfaces easy to sanitize? Screen tables can be made from galvanized hardware cloth.
- Is there enough shade for both produce and workers? Would it help to suspend a tarp? Can you use fans or mosquito netting to improve worker comfort? Is drinking water available?
- Are supplies such as bags or rubber bands kept where they are needed? Are other items kept out of the way (perhaps overhead)? Is the scale handy and easy to use?
- Are your workstation heights adjusted to the individual workers? For light-weight items, efficient work height is halfway between wrist and elbow, measured when the arm is held down at the worker's side. For heavier items it is slightly lower. Could some workers use a step stool? Could some tasks be done while sitting? Consider setting up workstations so that you move produce toward your leading hand, for example from left to right for right-handed people. You will have more control and be more accurate.
- Do electrical cords and outlets have Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters? They are inexpensive and easy to install and can prevent electrocution.

This material was developed by the Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project, whose goal is to find and share work efficiency tips that maintain farmers' health and safety and also increase profits. For more information, call (608)262-1054 or visit our website at <http://bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/>

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Work Efficiency Tip Sheet: Packing shed layout

