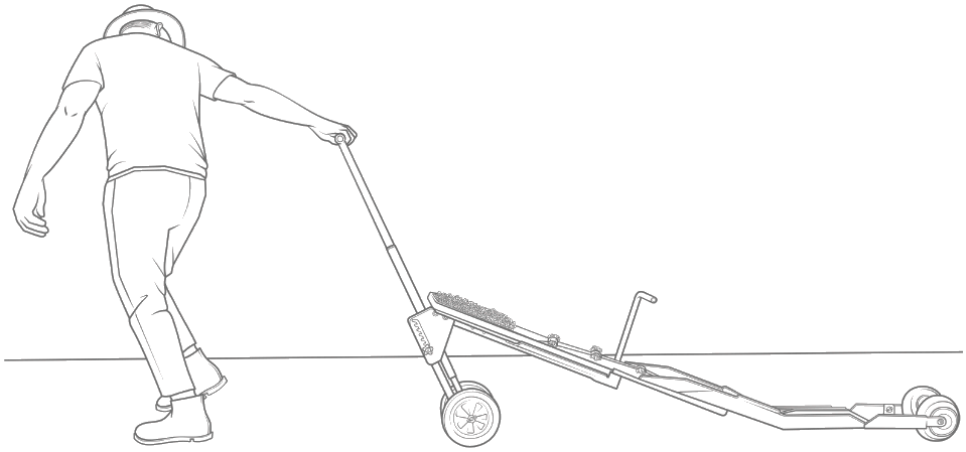
FREE GUIDE FROM MODERN GROWER

Why Paperpot?

The case for transplanting with the Paperpot system: what it does for your time, your crops, your margins and your body, and when hand transplanting is still the better call.



Time

One person, or a small team, can do more. Get crops in and get on to the next thing.

Crop control

Germinate in the nursery, plant older and stronger, and stay ahead of weeds.

Money

Lower labor per bed, earlier starts and faster successions.

Health

Plant standing up and walking, not crawling and kneeling.

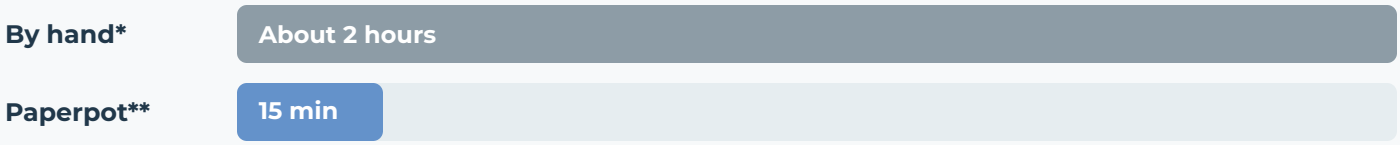
BY DIEGO FOOTER • MODERN GROWER • OCTOBER 2026

CHAPTER 1

Time: less labor can do more

The Paperpot Transplanter lays a chain of 264 connected paper pots into the bed as you walk. On a short chain that's 264 transplants in under a minute, and a full 100-foot bed in about 15 minutes. By hand, the same bed is hours of bending, popping plugs and setting plants one at a time.

One bed: 100 feet, 4 rows, 4" spacing (1,200 plants)



*At 10 plants a minute including popping plugs, an optimistic pace few people hold across a full bed. **15 minutes per 100-foot bed with the Paperpot Transplanter.

Speed compounds

Hand transplanting slows down as the day goes on: knees, back and focus all wear out. The Paperpot holds its pace, so planting five or more beds in a morning is realistic. Picture a two-person farm with five of those beds to plant on Monday. By hand that's about 10 hours of planting, five hours for both of you. With the Paperpot, one person is done in about an hour and a quarter, and the other is free for harvest or markets.

Time is your most limiting factor

- If you can't keep up with the schedule, you hire more help, and that cuts into your margin.
- It is easier to manage more equipment than more employees, and extra help you only need on transplant days has to do something the rest of the week.
- Less time transplanting means more time to work on the business, and more time to rest and be with family and friends. A rested grower does better work.

Timing keeps crops healthy

- Transplants do best when they go in at the right stage. When planting is fast, you can hit that window.
- If a storm is coming on transplant day, you can get everything in before it hits.
- In summer heat, beds go in and get watered in quickly, before plants wilt from stress.

CHAPTER 2

Better crop control

Less time in the nursery

Most Paperpot crops are transplanted about four weeks after seeding, and some growers transplant in as little as two. Seedlings aren't yanked out of plug trays. They go in the field in the same paper pot they grew in, so there's less disturbance to the roots, and you can plant a week or two earlier than with conventional plug trays.

Earlier is also better for the chain itself. Paper cells are small and have no bottoms, so roots left too long run out of room, tangle between cells and make the transplanter work less smoothly.

Transplant crops you'd normally direct seed

Peas, spinach, cilantro, beets, turnips, dill, beans and corn can all be started in paper chain pots. In the protected nursery you get near-perfect germination and even, healthy seedlings, and healthier seedlings mean healthier crops and bigger yields. You can also transplant crops that are too small to handle by hand, like spinach and beets.

An edge over weeds

- Flame weed the bed before you plant, then put in transplants that are already weeks old.
- The crop starts with a head start over any weed seed that germinates afterward, so cultivation is easier and the canopy closes sooner.

> **ONE TRADE-OFF**
>
> Plants in paper chain pots can take one to three days longer to settle into the field than plugs or soil blocks. Fast planting, early transplanting and watering in right away keep that adjustment short.

Shorter windows, better results

Because a bed goes in fast, you can plant at the best time of day: early before heat, late in the evening, or right before rain. Transplants get under shade cloth or watered in within minutes instead of sitting in the sun while the rest of the bed gets planted.

CHAPTER 3

Money

Grow more in the same season

- **Start earlier.** Crops you would direct seed can start as transplants in the nursery weeks ahead. A head start on the season means more to sell.
- **Speed up successions.** The next crop is already growing in the nursery, so a bed can go from harvest to replanted the same day. That fits more successions into the season.

The cost of planting one bed

Same bed as before: 100 feet, 4 rows, 4" spacing, 1,200 plants. Labor at a $20 wage plus 25% labor burden (payroll taxes, workers' comp, insurance), a loaded rate of $25 an hour.

PER BED	BY HAND	PAPERPOT
Planting time	120 min	15 min
Labor at $25/hr	$50.00	$6.25
Paper chain pots (5 x 4" at $4.39)	n/a	$21.95
Total	**$50.00**	**$28.20**

SAVED PER BED
$21.80
after paying for chains

TIME SAVED
105 min
per bed

BREAK-EVEN
$12.50/hr
loaded labor rate

A 4" bed uses 4.3 chains; most growers round up to 5 for spares, as shown. Chain price from a full case of 75 at shop.moderngrower.co, October 2026. Seeding time, trays and potting mix are treated as equal for both methods.

Nursery work

With the dibble board and Kwik Klik Slide you can seed all 264 cells of a tray in under a minute. Seedling care is the same as plug trays. (Dibble boards and Kwik Klik plates for plug trays are available too.)

Is it worth it?

Above a loaded labor rate of about $12.50 an hour, every bed planted with the Paperpot costs less than planting it by hand, and you cut planting time by nearly 90% without the wear on your body. Plug in your own wage, crew size, hand-planting speed and bed count to see where your farm lands.

CHAPTER 4

Health

Nobody wants to hand transplant two beds and then turn around and do something else.

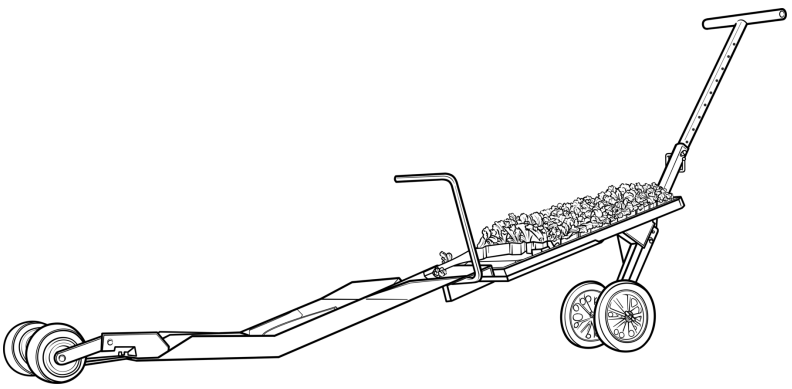
Traditional planting takes a toll

Hand transplanting a bed takes a long time, and the whole time is spent in repetitive positions that wear you down physically and mentally:

- Crawling and kneeling
- Stooping and hyperextending the back
- Counting down the beds still to go

What changes with the Paperpot

- **You stand upright.** You walk the bed and pull the transplanter. No kneeling, no crawling.
- **You finish fresh.** After a 15-minute bed you still have the energy for harvest, wash-pack or markets, instead of losing the rest of the day to recovery.
- **It is quiet and clean.** No engine, no fuel, no noise.
- **A daunting job becomes manageable.** Planting a big transplant day stops being something to dread, and getting it done fast is satisfying.



CHAPTER 5

Is the Paperpot right for you?

The Paperpot isn't for every farm. Here's an honest look at both sides.

The Paperpot fits if...

- You plant several beds a week, solo or with a small crew
- Your back and knees are a limiting factor
- You run tight successions and need beds turned fast
- You grow lettuce, onions, beets, greens, herbs and other compact crops
- You want to transplant crops you now direct seed

Hand transplanting may be better if...

- You farm at very small scale, plant only a few beds a week, or plant beds under 50 feet
- You have inexpensive labor that can sustain very fast hand planting; then hand planting can cost less in cash
- You plant through mulch or landscape fabric, or your soil is rocky or heavy clay
- You mostly grow large transplants like tomatoes, peppers and squash, which can only go in by hand
- You need a method that is quick to teach new crew

The bottom line

For most market gardens planting compact crops on a schedule, the Paperpot pays back in time first and money second: hours back every week, beds in on time, a fresher crew, and a lower cost per bed once labor is counted honestly.

> **KEEP GOING**
>
> Crop-by-crop growers notes, tech sheets and how-to videos are free at paperpot.co. The Pro-Series Starter Kit and paper chain pots are at shop.moderngrower.co. Questions: hello@moderngrower.co