

Winter 2025 | RRP \$20.00

N&G NEWS

NURSERY & GARDEN INDUSTRY NSW & ACT

**FREE Member
WHS Induction
Resources for
Nurseries &
Garden
Centres**

**IS THE TRADITIONAL
GARDEN CENTRE
BUSINESS MODEL FIT
FOR THE FUTURE?**



**Nursery & Garden Industry
NSW & ACT**

A fire or severe weather event can close your business for months.

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WHEN DISASTER STRIKES



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FROM PLANT TO
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NSW & ACT

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2025 Events & Training

CALENDAR



June

Thursday 12 | Pioneers Lunch
Wednesday 18 | Retail Costing Workshop [Sydney]
Thursday 19 | Social Media & Marketing Masterclass
Thursday 19 | First Aid [Central Coast]
Friday 20 | Production Costing Workshop [Sydney]
Tuesday 24 | First Aid [Sydney]
Wednesday 25 | NIASA Accreditation Info Session
Thursday 26 | First Aid [Northern Rivers]
Friday 27 | Pulling Back The Shade Cloth

July

Wednesday 9 | Sydney Trade Day
Wednesday 16 | Tree Stock Standards Workshop
Friday 20 | Production Costing Workshop [Coffs.H]
Friday 25 | Northern Rivers Christmas in July

August

Wednesday 20 | Sydney Trade Day
Tuesday 26 | Mid North Coast Trade Day
Friday 29 | Pulling Back The Shade Cloth

September

Tuesday 9 | Northern Rivers Trade Day
Wednesday 17 | Sydney Trade Day
Friday 26 | Pulling Back The Shade Cloth

October

Wednesday 15 | Sydney Trade Day
Friday 31 | Pulling Back The Shade Cloth

November

Wednesday 19 | Sydney Trade Day & AGM
Friday 28 | Industry Awards & Gala Night
Friday 28 | Pulling Back The Shade Cloth

December

Wednesday 10 | Sydney Trade Day

PLEASE NOTE: The dates provided for the year are approximate and may be subject to adjustments. Training dates are flexible based on expressions of interest and participant numbers. Feel free to reach out to us for more information!

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Do you get our emails?

We regularly communicate with our members via email. If you feel you could be missing out on any of our emails please contact the office on **(02) 9679 1472** or email **info@ngina.com.au** so we can look into it for you.



EXECUTIVE REPORT

It's hard to believe that almost three months have passed since I stepped into the role of CEO. Time has certainly flown, and I'm pleased to say we have been busy across many fronts.

Over the two months, I've had the pleasure of visiting members on the Central Coast and in the Hunter region. I continued my travels, with a visit to Kempsey to attend the Mid North Coast Groups planning meeting and catch up, followed by the Northern Rivers Pulling Back the Shade Cloth function at Boyd's Bay Group. It's been fantastic to meet so many of you, and I look forward to connecting with even more members across the state in the coming months.

One highlight recently was the association's involvement with the Royal Agricultural Society at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. After several years' absence, it was fantastic to re-establish our presence. Our promotion centred around encouraging visitors to reuse their drink cups and containers rewarding them with a free seedling to take home and grow. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all the volunteers who made this possible, and a special mention to Rowena Petrie for her instrumental role in making the partnership happen. Thanks also to our commercial sponsors: Grange Growing Solutions, Oasis Horticulture, and Royston Petrie Seeds whose support helped bring the activation to life. We are already looking ahead to returning next year, bigger and better.

The Sydney Group hosted an Industry Think Tank session at the Pennant Hills Sports Club on 14th May. This was a valuable opportunity for all stakeholders to come together, share insights, and discuss the future direction of our industry. With trading conditions remaining soft for many businesses, it's more important than ever that we work together to maintain market share and build a strong,

sustainable future. We invited influential voices from across the sector to contribute their views, and I was encouraged to see so many attend and take part in shaping our path forward.

On the national stage, many of you will have been following the work of Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) with Bunnings. Following extensive consultation, which I hope many of you contributed to, a Statement of Principles has now been released. This important document lays the groundwork for greater transparency, fair trading, and mutual respect across the supply chain. It responds directly to growers' calls for clearer communication, consistent expectations, and stronger protections. A key element is the establishment of an Independent Greenlife Arbiter, a vital mechanism to help resolve disputes and ensure concerns can be raised safely and independently. We hope this new process will truly be robust, transparent, and genuinely independent, addressing long-standing power imbalances. GIA's leadership on this initiative deserves our thanks and support.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the recent resignation of Melissa Meadows from the association. On behalf of the Board and all our members, I thank Melissa for her energy, dedication, and the vibrant personality she brought to every event she was involved with. We wish her every success in her future endeavours.

Thank you again for the warm welcome I have received from so many of you in these early months. I look forward to continuing our work together and supporting the growth and success of our industry.

Mike Mehigan
CEO



ASK AN

How do I take charge of Nursery Weeds?

Authors: Dr Sam Stacey
and Robert Megier



Getting on top of weeds is an ongoing frustration for many growers. Weeds are expensive to manage, they affect crop growth, can harbour pests and diseases and may also harm the nurseries.

Many nurseries have been able to get on top of quite significant problems by introducing a combination of different weed management practices. This includes practices that:

- 1) prevent the introduction and spread of weed seeds and
- 2) control weeds already present.

Some of the ways to prevent the spread of weed seeds through nurseries include:

- Potting into clean pots or washing and sterilising reused pots.
- Ensuring plug and propagation material is weed free (Figure 1).
- Immediately bagging and removing weeds that have been removed by hand.
- Sweeping weed mat to remove potting mix and weed seeds between crops.
- Using the right longevity and rate of controlled release fertiliser to avoid topdressing. Topdressing can significantly increase weed growth by giving them access to nutrients (Figure 2).
- Keeping paths, surrounds and gravel beds free of weeds.



Figure 1: Weed seeds in propagation material can quickly germinate in newly potted stock.



Figure 2: Fertiliser placement can affect weed growth. This photo shows a reduction in liverwort and oxalis growth (left side) when controlled release fertiliser (CRF) was applied 3-4 cm below the surface of the media compared to (right side) in which CRF is incorporated throughout the potting mix

Preventative practices may sound a bit inadequate initially, especially if you are surrounded by a sea of weeds all in flower. But the more that can be done to prevent the introduction and spread of weed seeds, the easier and more effective your control practices will be.

When we talk about weed control, we mean removing or killing weeds, for example by hand-weeding or herbicide use.

Efficient Hand Weeding:

Regular hand weeding is an essential weed management practice that should be used alongside other methods of control. Hand weeding can have a dramatic effect on the level of weed pressure in a nursery.

The goal should be to remove weeds before they set seed. Some common nursery weeds like flickweed (*Cardamine spp.*) and spurge (*Euphorbia spp.*) can, under ideal conditions, flower and set seeds within three to four weeks of germination. Nurseries will not be able to control these weeds if hand weeding is managed on an 8-week schedule, for example.

The most efficient method of hand weeding that we know of is colloquially known as "Pull-em or Leave-em". It was developed by Amy Barker and Joe Neal at North Carolina State University. They showed that hand weeding every two weeks was more effective at controlling weeds with short generation times. Additionally, weeding every 2-weeks used significantly less labour (0.31 vs 0.59 hours/100m²/week) when compared to weeding every eight weeks (Barker and Neal, 2016).

EXPERT

To achieve these labour savings when weeding every two weeks:

- Larger, established weeds should be removed as they could potentially flower and produce seeds prior to the next hand weeding cycle.
- Small weeds less than 1-week old can remain. Juvenile weeds will be removed during the next hand weeding cycle and prior to flowering.

Consistently hand weeding every two weeks will help to control some of the most prevalent and costly nursery weeds such as flickweed and prostrate spurge. Removing these weeds before they flower will help reduce the spread of their seeds and ultimately reduce their total number within the nursery.

Pre-Emergent Herbicides:

Pre-emergent herbicides are an excellent tool to help reduce weed pressure in nursery pots. We have already explained that hand weeding is an essential and ongoing part of any weed management program. Pre-emergent herbicides are complimentary; they will help to reduce the number of weeds and will therefore substantially reduce the cost of hand weeding.

It is essential to apply pre-emergent herbicides at the correct rate and with a nice, even distribution (Figure 3). When using spreaders to apply granular herbicides like OH2 Ornamental Herbicide, your walking speed and the spreaders flow rate setting determines how much product is applied. The rate at which you turn the handle does not affect the application rate. It affects how evenly the product is spread.

ICL have made a handy video that shows how to easily calibrate applications of granular pre-emergent herbicides. You can find the video by scanning the QR code in this article. We can also run hands-on training sessions at nurseries where staff learn to apply the correct rate of OH2 with an even distribution.

Pre-emergent herbicides can also be used on gravel paths and surrounds. Weeds in non-growing areas are a source of seed that can readily spread to potted stock. ICL supplies a granular pre-emergent herbicide designed for paths and surrounds called Sierraron 4G. We observe that growers who diligently control weeds in paths and surrounds have significantly less weed pressure affecting their crops.

For further information or to organise free weed management training at your nursery, please contact Robert Megier on 0418 239 503.

This article is based on a free book from ICL called "Effective Weed Management in Nurseries" by Dr Samuel Stacey. Copies are available through ICL and Garden City Plastics.

Reference: Barker A and Neal JC (2016) Frequent hand weeding saves money. North Carolina State University.

**How to
calibrate and
apply OH2
Ornamental
Herbicide**



ICL



Figure 3: Uneven application of pre-emergent herbicides leaves gaps where weeds can grow.

THE CHALLENGE OF ATTRACTING UNDER-35S

Several key factors may explain why younger generations are not engaging with garden centres in significant numbers:

➔ LACK OF DIGITAL INTEGRATION



Many traditional garden centres still rely heavily on physical retail without leveraging online platforms effectively. Younger consumers expect seamless

digital experiences, from e-commerce options to engaging social media content.

➔ LIMITED CONVENIENCE



With busy urban lifestyles, many young people prefer quick and convenient solutions for gardening and home décor. Subscription-based plant delivery services

and online retailers offer a level of ease that brick-and-mortar garden centres often lack.

➔ CHANGING LIFESTYLES



The traditional model assumes customers have large gardens or ample outdoor space, yet many younger people live in units or smaller homes.

Are garden centres doing enough to cater to this growing demographic with balcony-friendly, indoor plant, and space-saving solutions?

➔ EXPERIENCE OVER PRODUCTS



Millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha value experiences over mere transactions. They seek inspiration, education, and engagement. Garden

centres need to rethink how they create immersive experiences that encourage younger consumers to explore and connect with plants.



IS THE TRADITIONAL GARDEN CENTRE BUSINESS MODEL FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

By Mike Mehigan

Garden centres have long been the go-to destination for plant lovers, home gardeners, and DIY landscapers. However, as the market shifts and younger generations show a declining interest in these spaces, it's time to ask: Is the current business model still fit for purpose?

ARE WE PROVIDING THE RIGHT EXPERIENCE?

Retail is evolving, and successful brands today focus on creating a destination and experience rather than just a shopping location. Garden centres that want to attract younger customers should consider the following:

- **Workshops & Events:** Offering hands-on experiences like terrarium-making workshops, plant care classes, or sustainability talks can drive footfall and build loyalty.
- **Cafés & Social Spaces:** Many successful modern retailers incorporate lifestyle elements like trendy cafés, co-working spaces, or areas designed for Instagram-worthy moments.
- **Influencer Collaborations:** Engaging with social media influencers who specialise in home décor, sustainability, and plant care can expand a garden centre's reach and credibility among younger audiences.
- **Eco-Conscious Branding:** Sustainability is a major driver for millennials and Gen Z. Clear messaging around eco-friendly practices, sustainable plant sourcing, and plastic-free packaging can attract environmentally conscious buyers.

THE GROWING THREATS TO GARDEN CENTRES

Garden centres face increasing competition from multiple directions.

Big Box Stores: Large retailers can sell plants and garden supplies at prices independent garden centres can only dream of matching. However, they often struggle to provide knowledgeable advice and personalised customer service, which presents an opportunity for smaller retailers to differentiate themselves.

Online Sellers & Direct-to-Consumer Growers: The rise of e-commerce has made it easier than ever for consumers to buy plants and gardening products without setting foot in a physical store. Garden centres must establish a strong digital presence to remain competitive.

Authenticity Matters: If you promote quality products and excellent service, ensure that you truly deliver on those promises. Consumers are more informed than ever, and failing to meet expectations can quickly damage your reputation.

RETHINKING STOCK MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

With the availability of online ordering, do garden centres still need to hold and maintain large volumes of expensive stock? The traditional approach of stocking a wide range of products on-site requires significant investment, takes up valuable space, and increases the risk of unsold inventory.

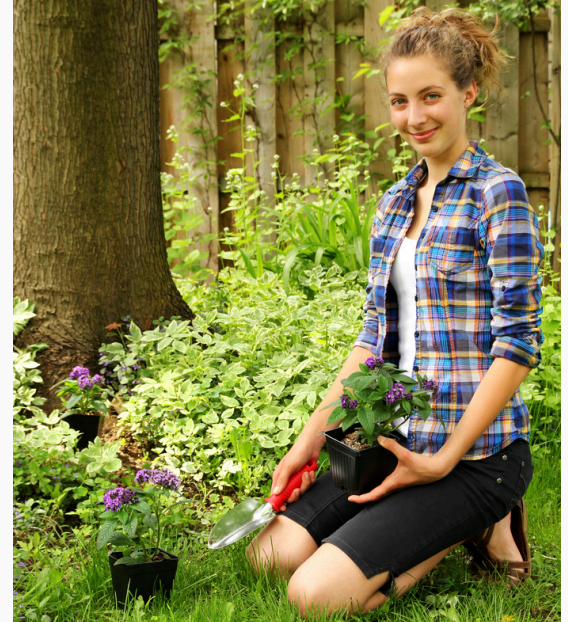
Instead, garden centres could consider a more strategic approach to inventory management:

- **Optimised Stock Levels:** Holding a smaller, carefully curated selection of best-selling and seasonal products while using drop-shipping or supplier fulfilment for less popular items.
- **Showroom Experience:** Using retail space more effectively by showcasing sample products, allowing customers to browse and order online for home delivery or in-store collection.
- **Multipurpose Space:** Repurposing some stock areas for experience-driven spaces such as workshops, cafés, or interactive displays that enhance customer engagement.

By reducing excess stock and integrating a more flexible inventory model, garden centres can improve cash flow, reduce waste, and create a more engaging shopping environment.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER SALES AND ENGAGEMENT

The retail world is rapidly digitising, and garden centres must embrace technology to stay relevant. Some key opportunities include:



➔ **E-Commerce Expansion:** A robust online store with detailed product information, virtual plant consultations, and home delivery services.

➔ **Augmented Reality (AR):** AR tools that allow customers to visualise how plants will look in their homes before purchasing.

➔ **Loyalty Apps & Personalisation:** Digital loyalty programmes, push notifications for plant care reminders, and personalised recommendations based on previous purchases.

➔ **Click & Collect Services:** Younger consumers appreciate the ability to browse online and pick up their items in-store, merging digital convenience with physical retail.

CONCLUSION: A NECESSARY EVOLUTION

The traditional garden centre model is struggling to capture the attention of younger consumers because it has not fully adapted to changing shopping habits and expectations. If garden centres want to remain relevant, they must rethink their approach, offering a mix of convenience, experience, and digital innovation. The question is no longer whether the business model is fit for purpose—it's whether garden centres are ready to evolve and thrive in the modern retail landscape.



THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PAYING ABOVE AWARD RATES

In today's tight labour market, attracting and retaining skilled staff has never been more challenging—particularly in the horticulture and nursery sectors, where hands-on expertise and reliability are critical to day-to-day success. While meeting minimum award wages satisfies legal requirements, businesses that choose to pay above the award are gaining a measurable edge.



1. Attracting High-Calibre Talent

Offering rates above the award instantly differentiates your business as an employer of choice. It demonstrates a commitment to valuing skilled labour and investing in people. In sectors where practical experience and performance directly impact quality and output, competitive pay can be the deciding factor for top-tier candidates choosing between multiple job offers.

2. Strengthening Staff Retention

High employee turnover can be costly. Estimates suggest that replacing a single employee can cost between 50% and 150% of their annual salary, depending on the role and level of experience. Offering above-award pay contributes to higher job satisfaction and loyalty, reducing churn. When employees feel recognised and fairly compensated, they are more likely to stay, fostering continuity and a more cohesive workplace culture.

3. Driving Productivity and Engagement

Well-compensated employees tend to be more motivated, engaged, and accountable. Competitive wages encourage initiative, pride in work, and a commitment to maintaining high standards. For horticulture and nursery operations, this can translate into better plant health, improved safety practices, superior customer service, and ultimately, higher sales and stronger commercial performance.

4. Reducing Absenteeism and Burnout

Financial stability enables employees to focus more fully on their work. By paying above the minimum, businesses help reduce the need for second jobs or additional income sources, which often leads to lower absenteeism, fewer burnout incidents, and more consistent attendance. This is especially vital during high-demand periods. Notably, unexpected employee absences can cost Australian businesses up to \$340 per day.

5. Enhancing Employer Reputation

Fair pay practices contribute to a strong, values-driven reputation. Internally, they help build a positive, supportive culture. Externally, they boost your credibility with clients, partners, and the broader community. In a competitive industry, being known for ethical and progressive employment practices is a powerful brand asset.



HR Strategy: Deepening the Business Advantage

Beyond immediate operational gains, paying above award rates supports longer-term HR and organisational priorities:

6. Promoting Equity and Reducing Wage Disputes

Above-award pay creates a buffer that reduces the risk of accidental underpayment, simplifies compliance, and protects your business from legal and reputational harm. It also promotes equity and fairness, foundational elements of a sustainable people strategy.

7. Supporting Workforce Diversity and Inclusion

Higher wages can remove financial barriers for underrepresented groups, helping attract a more diverse and inclusive workforce. This not only strengthens your organisational values but also contributes to better team performance and broader market appeal.

8. Enhancing Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Your EVP is what sets your company apart in the eyes of current and prospective employees. Competitive pay is central to this especially in industries where roles are physically demanding and require reliability. It supports attraction, engagement, and employer branding efforts simultaneously.

9. Facilitating Workforce Planning and Succession

Retention of experienced staff creates a foundation for long-term workforce development. Well-paid employees are more likely to invest in upskilling and pursue internal promotions, giving you access to a stronger internal talent pipeline and reducing external recruitment costs.

10. Reinforcing Employer Brand in Regional or Niche Markets

In regional or close-knit industries, reputation spreads quickly. Employers known for offering above-award wages build positive brand awareness that not only attracts employees but also earns the trust of customers, industry peers, and community stakeholders.

Paying above award isn't just an ethical or generous choice—it's a strategic business decision that drives results. In an industry built on growth and care, investing in your workforce by paying well is one of the most sustainable ways to cultivate operational success and organisational resilience.

By Tara Preston

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Simply refer a potential member. Once they have successfully signed up you will receive \$150 off your NGINA annual membership fees! The more members you bring on board, the more you earn/save!

WHY INCOMING STOCK QUALITY CONTROL MATTERS



By Tara Preston

Incoming stock quality control is essential to uphold your business's professional standards, efficiency, and profitability. Whether receiving living plants, fertilisers, pots, tools, or homewares, careful checks on arrival help catch problems early — from pests and diseases that threaten plant health to damaged goods that drive customer complaints and waste. These issues directly affect both your reputation and your bottom line, increasing write-offs, lowering sell-through rates, and adding operational strain.

Any items that do not meet your quality standards should be rejected immediately and returned to the supplier or held in quarantine until resolved. Avoid compromising your stock or customer experience by accepting substandard deliveries.

It is also best practice to record the date of arrival for every incoming stock item, usually on their price label. This supports effective stock rotation particularly for living plants and perishables and provides traceability in the event of future issues or supplier claims.

A consistent quality control process ensures only healthy, compliant, and saleable products enter your store or nursery, protecting your team, your customers, and your bottom line. It also strengthens supplier accountability and helps build long-term relationships based on reliability and transparency.

Incoming Stock Quality Control (ISQC)

Purpose:

To inspect and verify the quality of incoming stock before it is accepted into inventory. This ensures all items meet order specifications, quality expectations, and compliance standards. A strong ISQC process helps protect your business reputation, reduce stock losses, and keep displays fresh, functional, and sale-ready.

Applies to:

- Live plants and propagation material
- Garden products and allied items (fertilisers, pots, tools, etc.)
- Homewares and decorative goods (ceramics, baskets, vases, textiles, etc.)
- Stock for both retail sale and internal production use

ISQC Process Overview

1. **Receive Stock** – Check delivery against the Purchase Order (PO), invoice and/or delivery docket.
2. **Inspect Quality** – Visually and functionally inspect plants, homewares, and garden goods.
3. **Complete Checklist** – Use the applicable checklist to document findings.
4. **Determine Action** – Accept, reject, or quarantine based on inspection outcome.
5. **Report Issues** – Notify supplier of discrepancies, damage, or pest/disease presence.

ISQC Checklist – Retail Plants, Garden Products & Homewares

Use for finished goods being sold directly to customers.

- **PO Match** – Product type, quantity, and SKU match the purchase order.
- **Product Condition (Plants)** – No signs of pests, disease, wilting, or stress. Healthy foliage, stems, and roots.
- **Product Condition (Non-Plant)** – No cracks, chips, scratches, dents, or broken parts.
- **Packaging** – Undamaged, protective, and retail-presentable.
- **Labelling & Tags** – Barcodes, tags, brand marks, and price labels are correct and legible.
- **Size/Variant Accuracy** – Matches order (size, colour, fragrance, shape, etc.).
- **Aesthetic Presentation** – Uniform, clean, dust-free, and attractive to customers.
- **Expiry Date (if applicable)** – Still well within shelf life (e.g. fertilisers, candles, lotions).
- **Safety Compliance** – Meets safety standards (e.g. electrical items, sharp tools).
- **Supporting Documentation** – Manuals, care instructions, warranty cards, MSDS (if applicable).

Inspection Outcome:

□ **Pass** □ **Fail** □ **Quarantine**



ISQC Checklist – Production Nursery Inputs & Components

Use for plant materials, consumables, or tools used in propagation and growing.

- **PO Match** – Correct quantity and type of plant or material received.
- **Plant Health** – No disease, pests, wilting, or poor root structure.
- **Root Quality** – White, healthy roots – not pot-bound or underdeveloped.
- **Material Suitability** – Media, pots, trays, tags or tools meet performance expectations.
- **Batch/Lot Tracking** – Clearly labelled for traceability.
- **Packaging** – Securely packaged to avoid damage or drying out in transit.
- **Certification (if required)** – Movement declarations, MSDS, COAs, or accreditations included.
- **Storage Suitability** – Safe to store on site (e.g. fertiliser or chemical compatibility).

Inspection Outcome:

□ **Pass** □ **Fail** □ **Quarantine**

Rejection Procedure

If stock fails inspection:

- **Document the issue clearly**, including taking photographs, item details, batch/lot numbers (if applicable), and the date of arrival.
- **Segregate rejected items** immediately to prevent them from being used, sold, or displayed. Label them clearly as “Rejected” or “Quarantined.”
- **Notify** the purchasing or quality control team promptly.
- **Reject and Return** the stock to the supplier where possible, or request a replacement or credit. Include documentation of the inspection and non-compliance (with photos of the issue) for traceability.
- **Record the Arrival Date** – this helps track when the stock was received, supports rotation, and may assist in identifying patterns in supplier performance.
- **Follow up** – ensure that rejected stock is removed from inventory systems and supplier resolutions are confirmed in writing.



Is It Time to Invest in Paid Ads?

By Leisha Jordan



*As a business owner you know how vital it is to be found by the right customers, especially in an increasingly competitive online world. Organic social media and word-of-mouth will always play a role, but more and more businesses are turning to paid advertising on platforms like Google and Meta (Facebook & Instagram) to drive traffic, increase sales, and reach new audiences. **So... should you?***

When Paid Ads Make Sense

Paid ads can be a smart move if:

- You've got new stock or services you want to promote quickly
- You're launching a new website or opening a new location
- You're running a seasonal promotion or event
- Your organic social posts aren't getting much reach
- You want to reach a very specific type of customer (e.g. landscapers, young home buyers, or indoor plant lovers)

Paid ads aren't just for online stores. Even if you don't sell plants online, ads can help drive local traffic to your garden centre or boost brand awareness for your wholesale nursery.

Google vs Meta: What's the Difference?

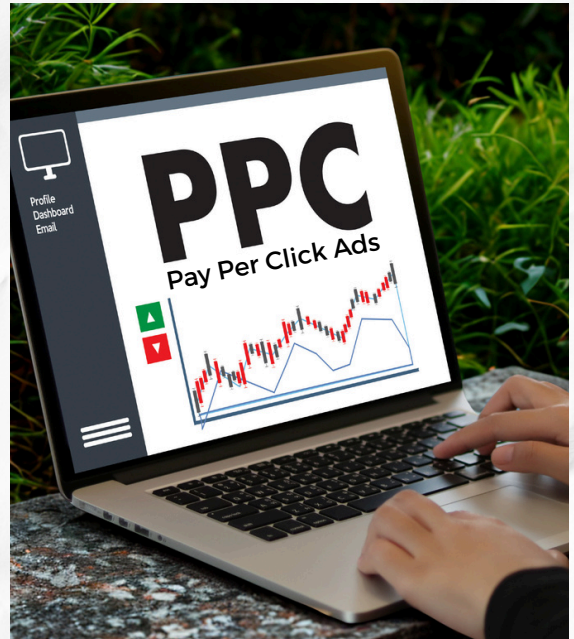
Many successful campaigns use both Google and Meta because they serve different purposes.

Google Ads are great when someone is actively looking for something like typing "*plant nursery near me*" or "*buy lemon tree Sydney*" into the search bar. These are people who are already interested and ready to act, so your ad appears right when they're searching for what you offer. Google ads appear on: Google search results, YouTube, websites.

Meta Ads (Facebook and Instagram) work differently. Instead of waiting for someone to search, Meta lets you put your business in front of people while they're scrolling through their feed. This is ideal for:

- Building brand awareness (so more people know your nursery exists)
- Promoting events or new arrivals with eye-catching photos or video
- Retargeting people who've already visited your website or liked your page but didn't take action... like reminding them to come back and check out your stock

Meta ads appear on: Feeds, stories, reels, marketplace.



How Much Should You Spend?

There's no set rule, but here's a realistic starting point for small to medium nursery businesses looking to test paid ads.

Ad Spend vs. Management Fees – What's the Difference?

Ad spend is the amount you pay directly to Meta (Facebook/Instagram) or Google to show your ads. This is your budget for reaching people.

Management fees are what you might pay a freelancer or agency to set up, monitor, and improve your ads.

Starter Budget Example

Ad Spend: \$10–\$30/day = approx. \$300–\$900/month.

Management Fee: \$500–\$1,500/month (if outsourcing).

So expect to budget around \$800–\$2,500/month total, depending on your goals and whether you manage ads yourself or outsource. You can adjust your spend based on the size of your business, marketing goals (foot traffic, sales, awareness) and the time of year (spring and summer often see higher returns).

How to Know if You're Getting Value

When you pay someone to run your ads, you want to know they're actually working, not just costing you money each month.

Too often, agencies will throw around numbers like:

"You got 10,000 impressions!"

"We generated 50 leads!"

"Your ad reached 20,000 people!"

Those might sound impressive, but **here's the truth:**



"It's not about how many people saw your ad or clicked. It's about whether they actually bought something, booked a visit, or showed up."

For small businesses, that's the difference between vanity metrics and real results.

What Real Value Looks Like:

- People actually calling, visiting, or buying because of your ad
- Your ad spend bringing in more income than it cost
- Seeing the campaign data but understanding it in plain English
- Getting clear reporting, not just "you got lots of clicks"

A good ad manager will:

- Set realistic goals (e.g. 5 extra customers per week)
- Track actions that matter (like phone calls or orders, not just clicks)
- Explain how your budget is being used and what's working
- Pivot and change strategy when something isn't working
- Offer proactive suggestions to improve results, not just wait to be told

If you don't know where your money is going or what results you're getting, or if nothing's changing even when it's not working, that's a red flag.

What to Ask Your Ads Manager

Use these questions to make sure you're getting value from your paid ads:

What specific results are we aiming for?

→ (e.g. more website purchases, more in-store visits, more phone calls)

How are you tracking conversions, not just clicks?

→ Ask how they know if someone actually did something valuable, like buying or booking.

What's working in the current campaign and what isn't?

→ A good manager should be upfront and ready to adapt.

What changes will you make if the results aren't strong?

→ They should be proactive, not just riding out the budget.

How much of my budget goes to ads vs. management fees?

→ Make sure you know exactly where your money is going.

Can I see the ad account or reports in plain language?

→ You should have access and understand the basics, even if you're not managing it yourself.

What About Just Boosting Posts?

"Boosting a post" on Facebook or Instagram is often the first step small businesses take into paid advertising. It's quick, easy and tempting. You click "Boost Post," choose a few options, and your post reaches more people. **But is it worth it?**

Boosting can be useful when:

- You want to increase awareness of a specific post (like an event or sale)
- You're building page likes or engagement
- You're testing what content resonates with your audience

But boosting has limits:

- It doesn't give you much control over who sees your ad
- It's not designed for driving real actions like purchases or bookings
- It lacks the detailed targeting, testing, and tracking you get with full ad campaigns

Think of boosting like putting a sign out front. It might catch a few eyes, but it's not the same as a targeted marketing strategy.

If you're going to spend more than \$100 a month on boosted posts, you're probably better off shifting that budget to a properly set up ad campaign managed by someone who knows how to get results.

Why You Should Consider Outsourcing

Paid ads are incredibly technical and time-consuming between targeting rules, tracking pixels, campaign types, A/B testing, and constant platform updates. Done poorly, you could burn through hundreds of dollars with little to no return. That's why we recommend working with a trusted paid ads specialist, especially if you're new to advertising or don't have time to manage it yourself.

A good specialist will:

- Understand your business and goals
- Build campaigns tailored to your local market or niche audience
- Save you time and stress by managing performance, not just spend

Think of paid advertising as a fertiliser for your online presence. It works best when the foundations are strong (good website, strong socials, solid customer experience). It's not magic, but with the right strategy and support, it can be a powerful growth tool.



The Role of Biostimulants in Ornamentals

In recent years, increasing focus has been placed on biologicals in both agriculture and amenity horticulture situations. This has been driven by a number of reasons such as improvements in biological product development alongside a reduction in plant protection products, cost and increasing regulation in various countries.

BACKED BY SCIENCE

Syngenta is changing this paradigm with HICURE® – a highly concentrated biostimulant for the horticulture and ornamental industry consisting of amino acids and peptides.

For which Syngenta conducted extensive scientific trials on HICURE® over many years, in numerous countries, utilising independent contractors to ensure unbiased results. With additional local trials to verify that the plant health benefits from HICURE® were replicated in local plant species, this science-backed approach sets a new standard in the biostimulant industry.

Under the biological banner we find:

- **Biocontrols:** Products derived from a natural or animal source and used as a control for pests and diseases in the same way as a traditional chemistry product is used, and
- **Biostimulants:** Products applied to naturally elicit a plant's response to stress.

Biostimulants could be classified into at least 7 various categories, with each category eliciting a plant response to their use. They are:

- **Humic/Fulvic Acids:** Humic acids are large complex molecules which in part boost exchange capacity in the soil, enabling more nutrients to be retained for the plant's use. Fulvic acids, being smaller and more soluble molecules, facilitate entry into the plant and assist with nutrient uptake.
- **Protein Hydrolysates:** they are a mix of amino acids, peptides, and small proteins. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins, and as enzymes, they are the biological catalysts responsible for chemical reactions in living organisms.
- **Seaweed Extracts:** best known as kelps, which can contain levels of essential minerals, vitamins, and plant hormones such as auxins, cytokinin and gibberellins which can promote plant health and development.
- **Chitosan:** Through manufacturing, produced chitosan are naturally biodegradable and used to enhance nutrient uptake and induce response to stress.
- **Inorganic Salts:** such as silica and phosphites which can be a source of certain nutrients and provide benefits through strengthening of the plant.
- **Beneficial Fungi:** best known as Trichoderma or VAM type products.
- **Beneficial Bacteria:** best known as Rhizobium, which fix nitrogen or Bacillus type products.

The outlined classification, however, is very general in nature and represents one of the challenges in today's biostimulant market. Natural plant response to stress or pathogen attack are naturally inbuilt and have adapted over millions of years of evolution. Plants and grasses differ in their makeup which play a role in stress management. And the biostimulant market is largely unregulated, resulting in many products entering the market without significant trial work to support their claims.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [SYNGENTAORNAMENTALS.COM.AU](https://syngentaornamentals.com.au)

RESULTS FROM HICURE® TRIALS

Syngenta's trial work displayed that HICURE® helps plants counteract stress during transport and when sitting in retail outlets, and combats wilting in cut flowers.

A set of trials using HICURE® were conducted at Australian Trials week in December 2024 at JD Propagation. The applications and trials were applied independently by agronomists, at 2 mL/L, 2 weeks apart for 8 weeks – with a total of 4 applications.

HICURE® GENERATED PLANT DROUGHT TOLERANCE BENEFITS. BOTH PLANTS HAD IRRIGATION TURNED OFF FOR 4 DAYS, TO REPLICATED PLANTS LEAVING THE PRODUCTION NURSERY:



HICURE® DROVE FLOWERING PLANTS TO FLOWER EARLIER, FLOWER MORE AND FLOWER LONGER, RESULTING IN MORE VISUALLY APPEALING PLANTS THAT REQUIRE LESS INPUTS TO REMAIN IN MARKETABLE CONDITION:



HICURE® DISPLAYED A STRONGER, DEEPER AND MORE FIBROUS ROOT SYSTEM QUICKER. ALSO INCREASING PLANT HEALTH BENEFITS OF HEAT, DISEASE, AND INSECT TOLERANCE WITH LESS INPUTS:



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In every retail garden centre, certain customer questions come up day after day. Knowing how to respond with clarity, confidence, and care not only builds trust, it can also lead to increased sales and return visits. Below is a detailed guide to the top 10 customer questions, including troubleshooting advice and recommended products to upsell with each.

The 10 Most Common Customer Questions at a Retail Garden Centre

1. “What plant can I put in this spot?”

Customers often describe a tricky area full shade, blazing sun, windy balcony, or compact courtyard.

First, ask:

- > **How many hours of direct sun does the area get?**
- > **Is it exposed to wind, frost, or pets?**
- > **Are you after colour, fragrance, screening, or edibles?**

Common Situations & Solutions:

Full shade: Try *Clivia*, *Aspidistra*, Peace Lily, *Plectranthus*, or Tree Ferns.

Part shade: Recommend *Camellias*, *Hydrangeas*, Hellebores, or *Daphne*.

Full sun (low water): Lavender, *Westringia*, *Grevillea*, *Agapanthus*, Rosemary.

Windy areas: Coastal *Banksia*, Pigface, *Lomandra*, *Hardenbergia*.

Small spaces or pots: Dwarf Lilly Pilly, Succulents, *Hebe*, or Lavender.

Frost prone areas: Deciduous trees (e.g. Crepe Myrtle, *Japanese Maple*), Cold-tolerant natives (e.g. *Correa*, *Hardenbergia*, *Callistemon 'Great Balls of Fire'*), Shrubs (e.g. *Hebe*, *Viburnum tinus*, *Choisya*, *Photinia*) and Perennials (e.g. *Hellebores*, *Hemerocallis*, *Sedum*)

Products to Recommend:

- Quality potting mix
- Slow-release fertiliser
- Mulch or bark chips for moisture retention
- Seaweed solution to reduce transplant shock
- Decorative pots or hanging baskets

2. “Why is my plant dying?”

This is a common but complex question. Start by asking:

- > **How often do you water it?**
- > **Is it in a pot or the ground?**
- > **Has the light changed recently?**
- > **Any signs of pests or root issues?**

Common Problems & Solutions:

Overwatering: Yellow leaves, soft stems, musty smell. Let soil dry, remove mushy roots, repot with free-draining mix.

Underwatering: Drooping, crispy leaves. Water deeply and mulch.

Too much sun: Leaves look scorched. Move to part shade or use shade cloth.

Pests: Aphids, mealybugs, scale, or spider mites cause spotting, stickiness, or webs. Use neem oil or insecticidal soap.

Nutrient deficiency: Pale or slow growth. Apply a balanced fertiliser.

Pot-bound roots: Roots circling the base or popping out of drainage holes. Repot into a larger container.

Products to Recommend:

- Moisture meter
- Insecticides (organic or synthetic)
- High-quality potting mix
- Seaweed solution for plant recovery
- Self-watering pots or saucers

3. “When should I prune this plant?”

Most customers want to prune without damaging their plants. Ask:

- > **Is the plant grown for flowers, foliage, fruit, or shape?**
- > **What is the name of the plant, or can they show you a photo?**

Timing Tips:

After flowering: *Camellias*, *Azaleas*, *Gardenias*.

Late winter/early spring: *Roses*, *Hydrangeas*, Summer-flowering shrubs.

All year (light maintenance): Hedges like Lilly Pilly and *Murraya*.

Fruit trees: Winter for structure; summer to control growth.

General Pruning Advice:

- Use sharp tools and prune above a node.
- Remove dead, damaged, or diseased wood first.
- Don't prune in extreme heat or just before frost.

Products to Recommend:

- Bypass secateurs or loppers (for hard wood)
- Pruning sealant for large cuts
- Gloves and safety glasses
- Fertiliser for post-prune recovery (not for dormant plants)



4. “Do you have any low-maintenance plants?”

Perfect for customers new to gardening or with busy lifestyles.
Ask:

- > **Are you planting indoors or outdoors?**
- > **Pots or in-ground?**
- > **Will they remember to water or fertilise regularly?**

Low-Maintenance Picks:

Indoors (low light): ZZ Plant, *Sansevieria*, Peace Lily, *Aspidistra*.

Indoors (bright light): *Monstera*, *Epipremnum*, *Philodendron*.

Outdoors (drought-tolerant): *Grevillea*, *Agave*, *Kangaroo Paw*, *Succulents*.

Outdoors (hardy & colourful): *Lavender*, *Westringia*, *Native grasses*, *Rhaphiolepis*, *Dipladenia*

Products to Recommend:

- Self-watering pots or soil wetter
- Slow-release fertiliser
- Indoor plant misters or humidity trays
- Water-saving mulch (sugar cane, straw, bark chips)

5. “How often should I water this?”

Help customers understand that watering needs vary by plant, location, and season.

General Tips:

Use the finger test: if the top 2–3cm is dry, it's time to water.

Potted plants dry out faster than garden beds.

Succulents and cacti: Fortnightly in warm months.

Tropicals and ferns: Keep evenly moist; don't let them fully dry out.

Seasonal Notes:

- > Increase watering during hot, dry, or windy weather.
- > Reduce watering during cooler months, especially for dormant plants.

Products to Recommend:

- Moisture meter
- Soil wetting agent
- Mulch for garden beds
- Drip trays for indoor plants

6. “What fertiliser should I use?”

The right fertiliser improves growth, flowering, and resistance to stress.

Match the fertiliser to the purpose:

Edibles: Liquid fertiliser high in nitrogen and potassium

Flowers: Slow release fertiliser high in potassium

Foliage/Indoor: Liquid fertiliser or slow release for indoors

Natives: Slow-release, low-phosphorus blends

Liquid vs. Granular:

- > Liquid fertilisers give fast results and are great during growth spurts.
- > Slow-release fertilisers offer long-term feeding and lower risk of overfeeding.

Products to Recommend:

- Matching fertiliser for plant type
- Organic compost or worm castings

7. “Is this plant safe for pets?”

Always ask:

- > **Are the pets cats or dogs?**
- > **Do they chew plants or dig?**
- > **Indoors or outdoors?**

Toxic Plants (Avoid):

Sago Palm, *Dieffenbachia*, *Philodendron*, *Monstera*, *Lilies*, *Aloe Vera*.

Pet-Friendly Alternatives:

Spider Plant, *Calathea*, *Golden Cane Palm*, *Peperomia*, *Boston Fern*, *Camellia*.

Products to Recommend:

- Pet-safe plant list or tags
- Raised planters or hanging baskets
- Bitter spray to deter chewing
- Barrier fencing or deterrent mulch

Click back to our
“Pet Safe Plants”
article in the
Autumn 2023
mag (page 12)
for more pet
plant tips!



8. “Can I grow this indoors?”

Help customers determine suitability by asking about their light, room, and care habits.

Great Indoors:

Aglaonema, Peace Lily, *Philodendron*, Spider Plant, Rubber Plant, *Anthurium*

Care Tips:

- > Rotate pot every few weeks for even growth.
- > Keep away from heaters and air-conditioning vents.
- > Dust leaves monthly.

Products to Recommend:

- Indoor potting mix
- Decorative cache pots
- Leaf shine spray or microfibre cloths
- Grow lights for low-light homes



9. “How do I repot this plant properly?”

This is a highly common question, especially with indoor plant buyers or customers bringing home something from the “clearance” or “needs TLC” section. It also opens the door to cross-selling pots, soil, fertiliser, tools, and care products.

What to Ask the Customer:

- > Is the plant root-bound or just due for an upgrade?
- > Will it stay in a decorative pot or move into the garden?
- > Is it indoor or outdoor?
- > What size pot are they planning to use?

Repotting Tips:

- Choose a pot 1–2 sizes larger with good drainage.
- Gently loosen the root ball, especially if roots are tightly coiled.
- Use fresh, species-appropriate potting mix (e.g. cactus mix, orchid mix, premium indoor blend).
- Press soil in lightly, don’t compact.
- Water in well and keep the plant out of direct sun for a few days post-repotting.
- Avoid fertilising for 2 weeks post-repot to let the plant settle.



Common Mistakes to Warn About:

- Using garden soil in pots (too heavy, poor drainage)
- Planting too deeply (can cause rot)
- Choosing a pot that’s too big (leads to soggy roots)

Products to Recommend:

- Potting mix suited to plant type (e.g. Indoor, Rose & Citrus, Orchid Mix, Cactus & Succulent Mix)
- New pots with drainage holes and matching saucers
- Seaweed solution for transplant recovery
- Soil wetter or perlite (to improve drainage)
- Gloves, scoop, and potting mat

10. “What can I plant right now?”

Use seasonal recommendations and a calendar to help them get planting today.

Autumn (NSW/ACT): Broad Beans, Kale, Garlic, Sweet Peas, Pansies

Winter: Bare-root roses, Stone fruit trees, Cabbage, Leeks

Spring: Tomatoes, Basil, Zinnias, Petunias, Corn

Summer: Sunflowers, Cucumbers, Chillies, Eggplants

Products to Recommend:

- Seedlings or punnets
- Planting guide calendar
- Seaweed solution for transplant shock
- Veggie fertiliser
- Mulch and compost



Equip Staff with Cheat Sheets & Product Pairings

Access this article as a word doc via the QR code below to amend it for your staff based on the specific options in your product range. Select products that you have in stock on a consistent basis and that are profitable lines. You can then print your guide for:

- Staff use and POS counter
- Induction for new team members
- Laminated quick-reference cards in high-traffic areas

Or convert the content into:

- A blog post for your website
- A social media series: “Top Garden Questions Answered!”
- Seasonal in-store posters with QR codes linking to your fertiliser or plant range

Update your own guide here



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GROWING TOGETHER

Insights from the Business Resilience Series® in Ballina

In April, business owners, leaders and industry members from across Northern NSW and Southern QLD gathered in Ballina for Moshie's third Business Resilience Series workshop, delivered in partnership with NGINA, NSW DPIRD, and TurfNSW.

Designed for owners and leaders in Australia's Greenlife Industry, this workshop gives growers, retailers, and supply chain partners a chance to step back from day-to-day operations and focus on key areas like team efficiency, cost savings, and long-term business planning.

The goal of the Business Resilience Series is to make the path to business improvement clearer and more achievable. It's about breaking down what can feel like overwhelming challenges into small, manageable steps whether that's understanding where the waste is, improving team productivity, or finding better ways to plan for the future. The sessions are hands-on, practical, and focused on real-world tools that people can apply right away.

Some of the most powerful moments came through the informal conversations before and after the workshop. Participants found common ground around shared challenges like staffing, rising costs, and time pressure and those conversations often sparked ideas and peer support that continued after the session ended.

"As a retailer, this session really helped me identify where the waste is in my business."
Marie, Eden at Byron

Through our work with businesses across Australia, we've seen first-hand how much can change when people reach out and seek support. Even with a great team, running a business can be isolating especially when things are tough, but taking the time to reflect, get clear on your goals, and connect with others in the same boat can be transformative. Having a space to talk things through, gain perspective, and feel supported by peers can help turn challenges into action.

The workshop also gave participants the opportunity to tap into existing support networks, explore funding options, and learn more about scholarship opportunities available through organisations like NGINA, NSW DPIRD, and TurfNSW many of which were new to those in the room.

The Business Resilience Series is about helping businesses work smarter, not harder and doing so in a way that feels realistic and sustainable. It's about creating time and space to focus on what matters, and providing the clarity and confidence to make improvements that last.

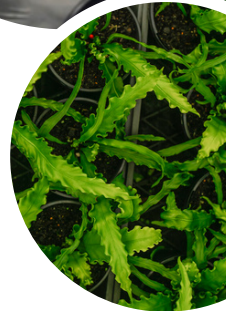
With more workshops, webinars, and online sessions planned across NSW and beyond including a Face-to-Face **Lean Leaders Program in NSW** there are plenty of opportunities coming up to get involved whether you're a business owner or part of a leadership team.

"It's really good that Moshie acts as an intermediary between the industry body and business owners — people were finally getting the support they needed."
Mat, Evergreen Connect

We work with growers, retailers and service providers across the Green Industry nationally, so if you're feeling stuck with cost control, business planning, or just unsure where to begin, we're here to help. Attend one of Moshie's upcoming events or reach out for a chat—we're happy to point you in the right direction.

Bruce Yelland
Founder - Moshie
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Josh Kyne
Commercial Business Manager
josh@moshie.biz | 0451 283 715





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UNLOCKING EMPLOYEE POTENTIAL

Using KPIs to Measure Performance in Australian Businesses

In the ever-evolving business landscape, companies need to constantly adapt and improve to stay competitive. One key factor driving success is the performance of employees. To effectively manage and optimise employee performance, many Australian businesses are turning to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs are quantifiable measures used to evaluate individual, team, or organisational performance against set goals and objectives. In this article, we will explore how KPIs can be used to measure employee performance and drive success in Australian businesses.

Defining Relevant and Specific KPIs: The first step in using KPIs to measure employee performance is to define relevant and specific indicators for each role within the organization. These KPIs should be directly linked to the company's overall objectives and tailored to the individual's job responsibilities. Examples of common KPIs include sales revenue, customer satisfaction ratings, project completion rates, and error reduction.

Establishing Clear Expectations:

Once KPIs have been defined, it's crucial to establish clear expectations with employees. This involves setting realistic and achievable targets, communicating the importance of each KPI, and providing guidance on how employees can improve their performance. By setting clear expectations, employees can better understand their role in contributing to the company's success.

Promoting a Culture of Continuous Improvement:

Implementing KPIs to measure employee performance can help foster a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation. By regularly assessing performance and providing feedback, employees are encouraged to constantly strive for better results. This drive for improvement can lead to increased productivity, innovation, and long-term success.

Recognising and Rewarding High Performance:

Using KPIs to measure employee performance allows Australian businesses to identify top performers and reward

their achievements. By recognising and celebrating high performance, companies can boost employee morale, increase job satisfaction, and encourage continued excellence.

Adapting KPIs to Changing Business Needs:

It's important to remember that KPIs are not static and should be reviewed and adjusted as needed to reflect changing business needs and priorities. By regularly evaluating and updating KPIs, organisations can ensure that they remain relevant and continue to drive success.

In conclusion, KPIs are a valuable tool for measuring employee performance and driving success in Australian businesses. By defining relevant KPIs, setting clear expectations, and providing regular feedback, companies can unlock the full potential of their workforce. By aligning KPIs with employee development, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, and recognising high performance, businesses can stay competitive in today's dynamic business environment.



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NGINA members get free access to expert HR advice through the HR Focus Workplace Advice Line. Call the office at 02 9679 1472 or info@ngina.com.au for the monthly code, then call Belinda on 0438 464 787 with the code.



Awards & Gala Dinner

You're invited to join us on

Friday 28 November

Canapés & Drinks: 6:00pm
Dinner & Awards Presentation: 6:30pm

Guest MC:

Simon Holloway



Dress Code: Cocktail

Cost: \$195 Per Head

Location: Rydges Norwest

RSVP: By Friday 7 November

Top 5 Reasons to Apply for NGINA's Industry Awards in 2025

1. Gain Industry Recognition

Be recognised as a leader in the NSW & ACT nursery and garden industry. Winning or being shortlisted demonstrates excellence and innovation to peers, customers, and suppliers.

2. Boost Your Brand Credibility

An award badge is a trusted mark of quality. It can help build trust with customers, attract new business, and strengthen your brand positioning in a competitive market.

3. Celebrate Your Team's Hard Work

Applying gives you the opportunity to reflect on your achievements and reward your team for their contribution to your business success. It's a morale booster and a point of pride.

4. Attract Media and Marketing Opportunities

Finalists and winners are featured across NGINA's marketing channels, social media, and industry publications, offering you free promotion and increased visibility.

5. Benchmark and Improve Your Business

The application process encourages you to assess your business practices, goals, and outcomes helping you identify areas of strength and opportunity for growth.



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How Plants Talk: The Secret Language of Roots, Chemicals & Fungi

Plants might not have mouths or ears, but they are far from silent. Research in the fields of chemical ecology, plant physiology, and mycorrhizal science has uncovered a remarkable fact: plants communicate with each other, with fungi, and even with insects using complex chemical and electrical signals.

Here's a deeper look into the fascinating world of plant communication systems and why they matter to everyone working in horticulture.

Airborne Chemical Signals: VOCs & Plant-to-Plant Warnings

When under attack by herbivores (e.g. aphids or caterpillars), many plants emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) as tiny molecules released into the air.

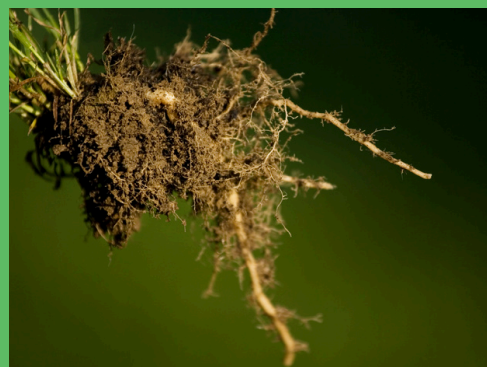
These VOCs serve multiple functions:

- Priming neighbours: Nearby plants of the same or even different species can detect VOCs and activate defensive pathways before the attack reaches them.
- Calling for help: Some VOCs attract predatory insects, such as *Cotesia glomerata* (parasitic wasp), to prey on the attacker.

Example: Lima beans (*Phaseolus lunatus*) release methyl jasmonate to trigger defence responses in nearby plants.

VOCs include molecules like:

- Methyl jasmonate (MeJA)
- Green leaf volatiles (GLVs)
- Terpenes (e.g., linalool, ocimene)



Root Exudates: Chemical Messaging Below Ground

Plants release a range of compounds through their roots — collectively known as root exudates — including sugars, amino acids, organic acids, phenolics, and flavonoids.

These compounds:

- Influence microbial communities in the rhizosphere
- Act as allelopathic agents to suppress neighbouring plant growth
- Trigger signalling pathways in symbiotic fungi and bacteria

Example: Sorghum produces sorgoleone, a potent allelochemical that suppresses the germination of competing weeds.

These signals can influence:

- Phosphorus solubilisation via phosphate-solubilising bacteria
- Nitrogen fixation through signalling with *Rhizobium* species
- Pathogen suppression via beneficial microbes

Mycorrhizal Networks: The “Wood Wide Web”

In natural and cultivated systems, over 90% of plant species form symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungi especially arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) from the Glomeromycota phylum.

Through hyphal networks, these fungi connect the root systems of multiple plants, facilitating:

- Nutrient transfer (e.g. phosphorus, nitrogen, carbon)
- Hydraulic redistribution (sharing water between plants)
- Warning signals (sharing chemical alerts about pests or pathogens)

Example: In Douglas fir–paper birch ecosystems, carbon can move bidirectionally through shared mycorrhizal connections, supporting shaded seedlings.

Research by Suzanne Simard and others has shown that mature “hub trees” can prioritise their offspring by directing more carbon to related seedlings via these networks.

Electrical Signals & Action Potentials in Plants

Although slower than in animals, plants can transmit electrical impulses (called action potentials or variation potentials) along their vascular tissues.

These are triggered by:

- Mechanical wounding
- Rapid changes in temperature
- Pathogen attack

These signals can cause systemic changes in plant physiology, including:

- Stomatal closure
- Activation of defence genes
- Alteration of growth hormones

Example: *Arabidopsis thaliana* uses electrical signalling involving glutamate receptor-like channels (GLRs) to send defence signals from leaf to leaf.



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Why It Matters to the Nursery Industry

Understanding how plants communicate — both above and below ground — can significantly improve how we grow, manage, and sell them. This knowledge helps:

- Detect early signs of plant stress (e.g. pest attack, nutrient deficiency, or overcrowding)
- Inform smarter use of companion planting and crop placement
- Improve the success of biological control strategies (e.g. attracting predatory insects)
- Support healthier soils by encouraging beneficial fungi and microbes
- Reduce reliance on chemical inputs through more responsive, ecological growing systems

Whether you work in production, retail, or plant care, tuning into “plant chatter” leads to stronger plants and better results for your business and customers.

By Tara Preston

WHS INDUCTION RESOURCES FOR NURSERIES & GARDEN CENTRES

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FOR MEMBERS



Whether you're hiring new staff, training a student, or updating your compliance records, NGINA has created a suite of simple, effective WHS tools tailored to our industry. Built in collaboration with Workplace Partners and filmed onsite at a working nursery, our video and manual make it easy to induct, train, and protect your team.

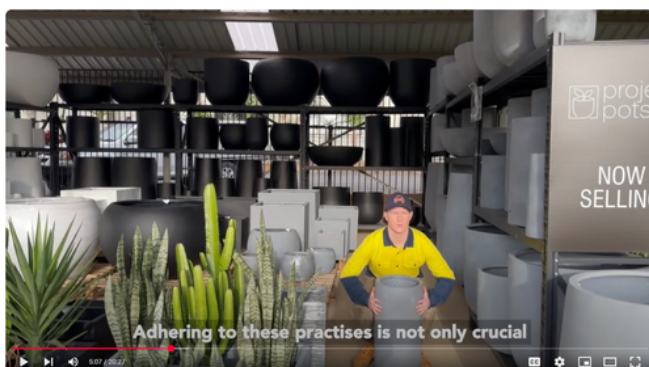
What's in the Induction Video?

Split into 15 easy-to-follow sections:

- PPE and worker responsibility
- Risk assessment and hazard ID
- Safe operating procedures
- Manual handling
- Chemical, height and electrical safety
- Incident reporting
- Emergency response
- Chain of responsibility (CoR) and more!



- ✓ Designed for nurseries and garden centres
- ✓ Watchable in short bursts or all at once
- ✓ Suitable for students and seasonal staff
- ✓ Includes quiz and certificate for training records



www.ngina.com.au/whs

WHS Manual for Nurseries

Need to implement a full WHS system?

Purchase our 153-page editable WHS manual:

- Includes policies, procedures & emergency plans
- Built for small to medium businesses
- Provided in Word format for easy editing
- Step-by-step guidance to get compliant in 30 days



To order: email info@ngina.com.au | \$200+GST (digital) or \$250+GST (digital + printed copy)

Project Update: Storm and Flood Impacts at Production Nurseries in NSW/ACT

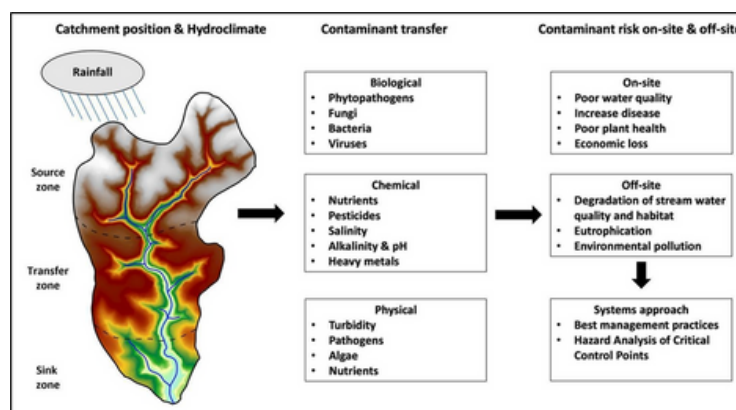
Macquarie University and NGINA Project Update

By Tim Ralph, Macquarie University

The project is wrapping up in June 2025, with the final transfer of data, maps, factsheets and a framework for understanding and mitigating water-borne contaminant concerns at production nurseries related to storms and floods. We have also published an open access (free) review of waterborne contaminants in high intensity agriculture and plant production, including a summary of on-site and downstream impacts (see Megan Gomes, Tim Ralph, et al. 2025. In: Science of The Total Environment, Volume 958, Article #178084, available on the NGINA website.

There will be 15 factsheets that will be available for download, including:

1. Water Quality Overview
2. Catchments and Waterways
3. Storms and Floods
4. Water Sampling
5. pH and Alkalinity
6. Salinity
7. Water Hardness
8. Heavy Metals
9. Nutrients
10. Turbidity
11. Sediment
12. Pathogens
13. Aquatic Biota
14. Weeds
15. Adaptive Management



Summary of physical and biogeochemical factors contributing to waterborne contaminant risk at production nurseries. Source: Gomes et al. 2025 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.178084>

The overall objectives of the project have been met, including:

1. Scoping and assessment of catchment conditions and known contaminants for NSW production nurseries, including landscape setting, runoff and hydrology, water and soil contaminants, and plant pathogens.
2. Validation and monitoring data for storm and flood impacts associated with water storages at key nurseries in three production-hub regions of NSW heavily impacted by flooding in 2021: north coast NSW, central coast NSW, and north-western Sydney.
3. Spatial data, a decision-support framework and associated resources to assist the NSW nursery industry with water contamination mitigation efforts and best management practices for storm and flood events.

The methods we used fell into five stages:

1. Understand the problem through discussions and engagement with the NSW & ACT nursery industry.
2. Review and develop conceptual models to describe and predict water-borne contamination within a nursery site, and also contamination to off-site areas.
3. Spatial data collection and analysis to characterise production nurseries by their size, landscape position and context, including contributory flow and runoff areas.
4. Site-specific assessment of water quality and contaminant loads at 10 focus nurseries.
5. Develop a decision-support framework and resources to assist nursery owners and managers to understand and mitigate water contamination concerns in storm and flood situations.

NGINA is in the process of collating all of the information for dissemination to the membership. We look forward to sharing these results and seeing the benefits of the project in the coming months and also over the longer-term future.

Pathogens

OVERVIEW

- Pathogens are microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and parasites, that can cause diseases in nursery plants.
- These organisms can impair plant growth by disrupting nutrient and water uptake, reducing yield and overall plant health (**Figure 1**).
- Infected plants often exhibit increased vulnerability to environmental stress and secondary pests or diseases.

KEY FACTORS

- Pathogens such as *Phytophthora*, *Phytophthium*, and *Pythium* are widespread in nursery soils, water bodies (e.g. dams and tanks) and irrigation systems, and can cause severe root and stem diseases (**Figure 2**).
- Fungal infections, including powdery mildew and downy mildew, affect aboveground tissues like leaves and stems, resulting in lesions, wilting, or discoloration.
- Soilborne pathogens such as root-knot nematodes and pathogenic fungi cause diseases like damping-off and root rot, weakening root systems and limiting plant access to water and nutrients.
- Pathogens may enter water supplies through surface runoff from agricultural and urban areas, especially after rain events.
- Damaged or poorly maintained irrigation infrastructure (e.g., cracked pipes, leaks) can become entry points or reservoirs for pathogens.



Figure 1. Fusarium wilt symptoms on leaflets. Source: UC Cooperative Extension, Los Angeles County. Accessed September 9, 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nursery water sources can be a major vector for pathogen spread, affecting both plant health and water quality.
- Preventive action and infrastructure hygiene are critical for reducing pathogen load in nurseries.
- Management approaches combining water treatment, sanitation, and monitoring are the most effective way to protect plant health.

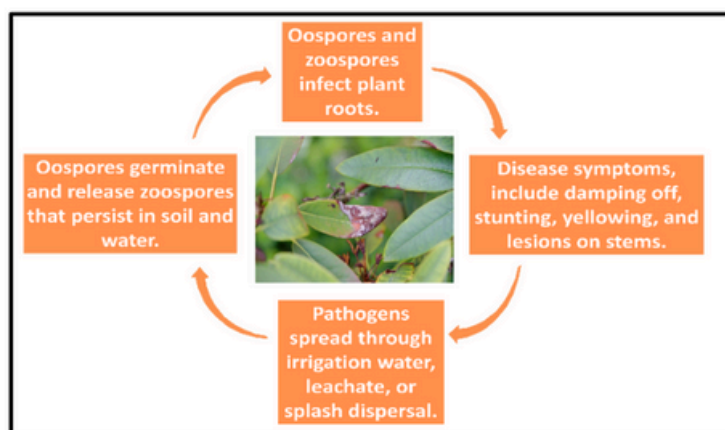


Figure 2. Example of *Phytophthora* infection and its lifecycle.

MANAGEMENT

- Routinely inspect plants for symptoms of disease. Quarantine new stock before integrating with existing nursery plants to limit pathogen introduction.
- Avoid excess watering because saturated soils promote pathogen proliferation. Use drip irrigation where possible to reduce moisture on foliage and soil surfaces.
- Treat irrigation water using UV disinfection, chlorination, ozonation, or filtration to inactivate or remove pathogens.
- Practice strict hygiene and regularly clean equipment, remove diseased plant material and standing water to limit pathogen persistence.
- Adopt an integrated pathogen management strategy that combines preventive practices, ongoing monitoring and testing, and targeted control measures to minimise impacts.

pH & Alkalinity

OVERVIEW: pH

- pH is a measure of how acidic or alkaline (basic) a solution is, linked to its hydrogen ion concentration.
- A pH of 5.5–7.0 is considered optimal for most nursery plants; values below 5.5 are generally too acidic, and above 7.5 are generally too alkaline.
- The pH scale is logarithmic, as each whole-number change represents a tenfold difference in acidity or alkalinity. For example, water with pH 5 is 10 times more acidic than water with pH 6.
- pH directly affects nutrient solubility and uptake by plants (**Figure 1**) and can impact the performance and lifespan of irrigation infrastructure (**Figure 2**).

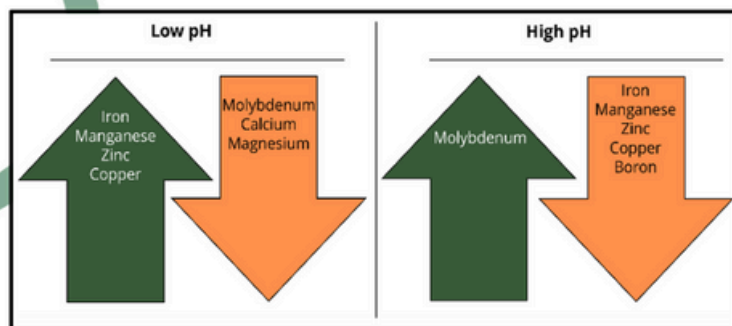


Figure 1. Effects of low and high pH on plant nutrient uptake.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Water pH and alkalinity strongly influence nutrient solubility and plant health.
- In general, a pH level between 5.5 to 7.0 is good for most nursery crops.
- Managing both pH and alkalinity is essential for maintaining healthy, productive nursery plants, especially in container systems with limited buffering capacity.
- Regular monitoring and timely adjustments of pH and alkalinity can prevent long-term issues.

OVERVIEW: Alkalinity

- Alkalinity is a measure of a water source's capacity to neutralise acids and indicates how resistant a solution is to changes in pH, or its buffering capacity.
- Alkalinity is not the same as water being "alkaline."
- Alkalinity is influenced by dissolved compounds such as carbonates, bicarbonates and hydroxides, and is often linked to water hardness.
- High alkalinity can interfere with nutrient availability, particularly calcium and magnesium, and make pH adjustments more difficult (Figure 3).

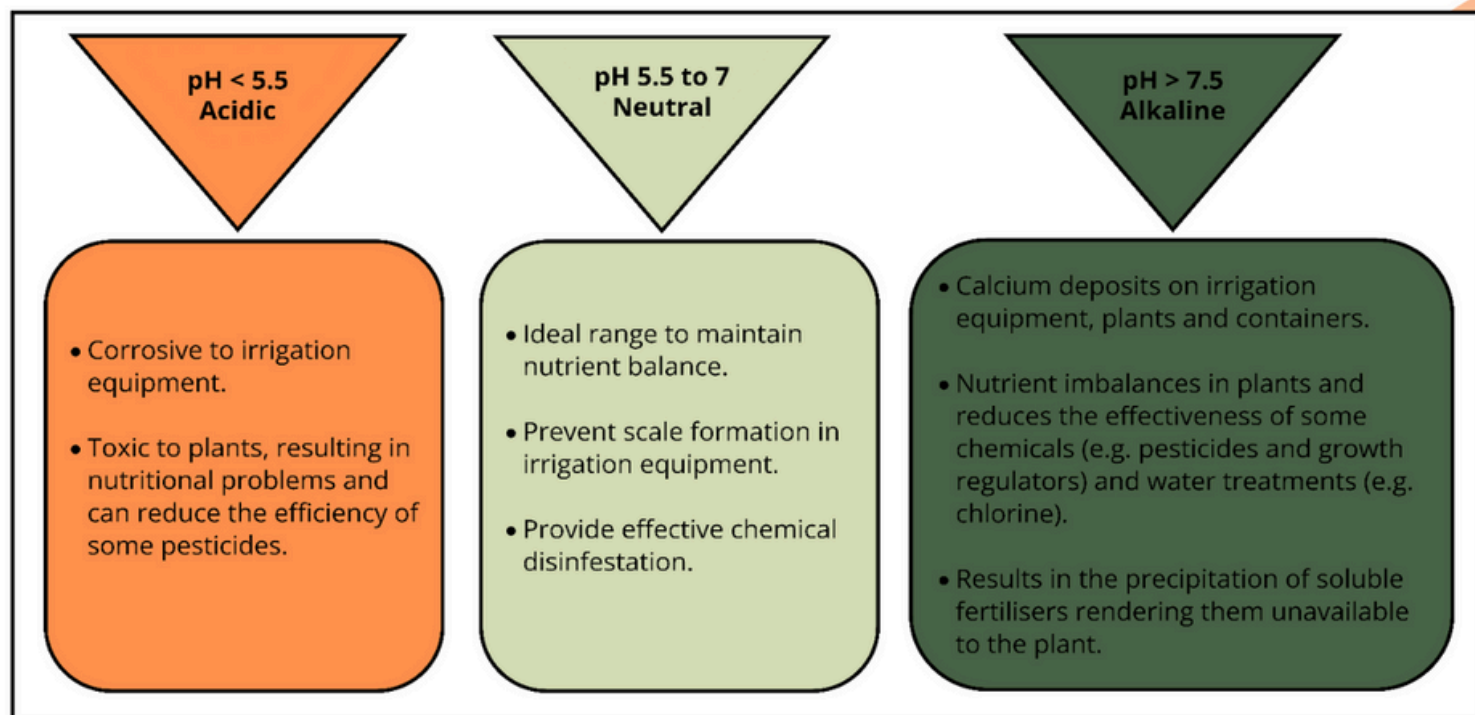


Figure 2. Effects of low, neutral, and high pH on container plants and nursery equipment.

pH & Alkalinity

KEY FACTORS

- Water pH influences container soil and substrate solution pH. Soil-less substrates (e.g. peat-based or coconut coir mixes) are generally more susceptible to fluctuations in pH.
- Local underlying geology and sources of water (e.g. surface water, groundwater, rainwater) determine the baseline pH and alkalinity in irrigation water.
- Seasonal changes in rainfall and temperature can cause shifts in water chemistry.
- Fertilisers and supplements can influence pH and alkalinity of irrigation water. For instance, the application of lime to treat soil acidity can raise the pH of both the substrate and irrigation water.
- Sediment, suspended particles, and decomposing organic matter can interact with water and release minerals and organic acids that can influence pH and alkalinity.

MANAGEMENT

- It is important to monitor and test the pH of irrigation water regularly to make informed decisions about pH adjustment and nutrient management. Use good quality strips or an electronic meter to test pH regularly.
- pH issues can be resolved by adjusting the buffering capacity of the substrate. For example, high acidity can be treated with agricultural lime (calcium carbonate). Alternatives include changing or blending water sources.
- Use good quality scientific alkalinity strips regularly to monitor alkalinity. High alkalinity can be treated with acid injections (e.g. sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid).
- Alternatively, the addition of sulfur or organic matter, can modify soil pH and improve nutrient availability.

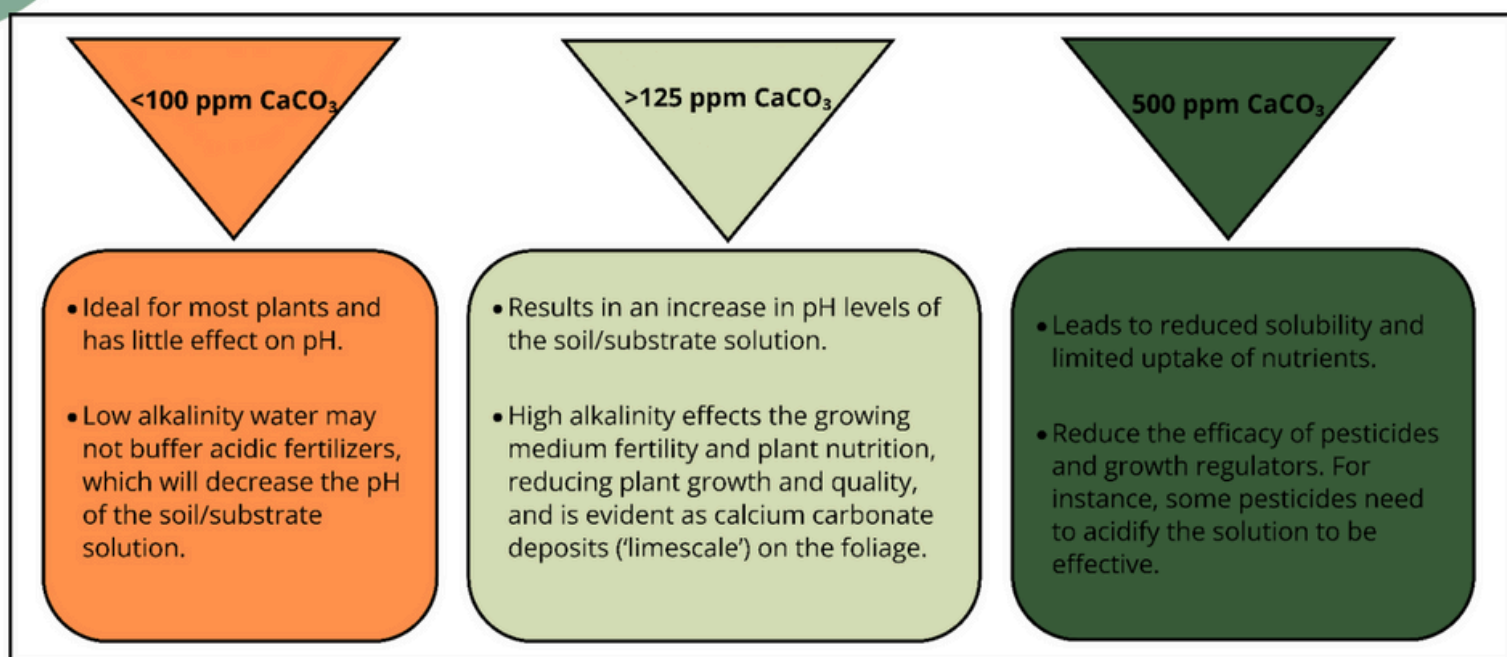


Figure 3. Effects of low, moderate, and high alkalinity on container plants.

Become a member



Nursery & Garden Industry
NSW & ACT

The Nursery & Garden Industry NSW & ACT (NGINA) is an industry-led, membership-based, not-for-profit organisation that is the peak industry body for operators in the nursery and garden sector in NSW and ACT. This can include:

- growers and producers of plants
- wholesalers and hirers of plants
- retailers of plants and related products
- industry gardens, florists and landscapers
- allied traders—suppliers of growing media, chemicals, containers, tools and equipment, etc.
- service providers including consultants, training providers, government departments, etc.

Members of NGINA range from small to medium-sized family-based operations through to multinational corporations and all share a passion for greenlife and for the industry.

Such a diverse membership brings with it many different needs and requirements and that's why we have created a range of membership categories.

NEW

MEMBER INCENTIVES

**\$150 COULD
BE YOURS!**

Earn \$150 off your membership, simply refer a potential member. Once they have successfully signed up you will receive \$150 off! The more members you bring on board, the more you earn!



Students

\$50 yearly

Subscription to N&G News, eNews, access to Sydney and regional trade days. Invitations to attend our four NextGen events held throughout the year



Single Business Owner

**\$55 monthly
\$645 yearly**

A business entity (owner/operator) that conducts its operations with no additional employees and/or contractors engaged in the delivery or production of its products or services



Trading

**\$135 monthly
\$1,520 yearly**

Available for businesses with 5 or less full-time equivalent (FTE*) employees including owner/principal



Enterprise

**\$220 monthly
\$2,536 yearly**

Available for businesses with 6–20 full-time equivalent (FTE*) employees including owner/principal



Corporate

**\$400 monthly
\$4,554 yearly**

Available for businesses with more than 20 full-time equivalent (FTE*) employees including owner/principal

Membership periods follow the calendar year, with pro rata rates applied for new members joining partway through. Members can choose to pay a one-off annual subscription or opt for 12 monthly instalments, which include a 5% surcharge (already reflected in the displayed rate).

Complete our NGINA membership application form online by scanning this QR code. Approved applicants will be notified by email or contacted by phone. If you have any questions about membership, please contact the NGINA office on 02 9679 1472.



NGINA MEMBER BENEFITS



Growth

We know that you, like all our members, strive to grow both your business and our industry. To help you flourish, membership of NGINA provides you with access to a suite of key business tools and services.

- NGINA Advice line. If we can't help you, we will find someone who can.
- Personal HR advice from the specialists at Business Australia
- Access to 'members only' area on NGINA's website
- Resources to help run your business inc 250+ Industry specific discounted HR & WH&S templates & documents
- NGINA Member support calls & visits



Connectivity

Knowing what's both going on and growing on is paramount in our industry. NGINA strives to make this an easy task for you by providing a range of tools, platforms and forums designed to ensure you are up to date and informed.

- Networking events
- Special Interest Groups
- Jobs Board for posting positions vacant
- Comms: fortnightly eNews, quarterly N&G News Magazine, Texts, Monthly Member Forums, Podcasts, Social Media, Biosecurity Legislation and grant updates
- Free attendance & opportunity to be a stall holder (fees apply) at our NSW Trade Days (Sydney, Port Macquarie, Northern Rivers) as well as NGIQ Trade Day



Knowledge

Each year NGINA conducts a wide range of industry-driven events, workshops and training courses to help you build your business, and grow and develop not only your knowledge and professional skills but also those of your staff.

- Be kept informed of new opportunities for your business
- Keep your finger on the pulse of industry trends
- We can help promote large upcoming news and events on your behalf
- Industry workshops and training courses including first aid, chemcert, marketing & business training



Savings

NGINA can save you both time and money—from helping to untie legal knots to providing industry-specific technical advice, offering subsidised training and accreditation programs to cost-saving initiatives with industry partners—to name just a few!

- Commercial member discounts with our commercial partners: Dell Aust, Choice Energy & Ledermans Insurance Brokers
- Free hire of NGINA's large meeting room and assisted catering
- Inclusion on the Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) trade register
- Discounted advertising in N&G News Magazine



Recognition

Being a member of an Industry Association shows a level of excellence and high standards of your business and products.

- Professional recognition at Industry awards night
- New member feature in our publications
- Alliance with us giving customers confidence in the high standards of your business and product
- The use of the NGINA logo
- Social Media posts from our Member Services Manager to your business



Representation

NGINA represents its members at all levels of government to ensure policy makers, regulators, and research and development opportunities are aware of your business priorities

- Representation through us to government, policy makers, regulators and research and development
- Eligibility to apply for NGINA board or advisory committees
- Business listing on our website & store locator so the local public can find you
- Our association offers a unique chance to meet celebrities and get up close and personal with some of the biggest names in the industry.

WHAT YOUR COMPANY CAN SAVE BY BEING A MEMBER:

HR & IR Advice line | \$3500

Average cost of an external support line

HR & IR Documents | \$5000

Average cost to create legal company specific HR & IR documents through a lawyer

WH&S Manual | \$5000

Average cost to create a legal company specific WH&S Manual through a lawyer

Jobs Listings | \$225

Per job: Posted on website, Instagram, Facebook, Linked In & eNews

N&G News Ads x 4 | \$6600

Yearly NSW Trade Day Entry | \$250

N&G News x 4 | \$50

Social Media Advertising | \$80

Forklift Training | \$300

Per person

Training Savings | \$150

Members get 10-20% off. Average calculated per person for 3 courses per year

Dell Australia, Choice Energy & Ledermans Insurance Brokers Commercial Member Discounts | \$2500+

Price may vary year to year

Meeting Room | \$500

Full day, fully equipped

GIA Register | \$2500

Non-member listing price

New Member Features | \$1100

Full page article/ad in N&G News, CEO welcome in eNews, Full ad with company links in eNews

Social Media Post | \$80

Recap of our visit and a blurb about your business on our Facebook and Instagram.

Store Locator | \$1000

Be found by the public and other industry professionals on our website store locator.

Website Links | \$500

Member feature on our website with all your contact details including backlinks to your website which assist in boosting SEO.

OTHER INVALUABLE SERVICES:

- NGINA staff technical support
- Freight savings at Trade Day
- Networking
- Exposure
- Information
- Professional Development

A TOTAL SAVING OF: \$30,515.00*

*Savings may vary year to year and are calculated by the average member potential savings

CEO &
MEMBER
SERVICES
MANAGER

NGINA

MEMBER

SITE

VISITS

WITH TARA & MIKE

TOGETHER WE GROW!

Tara, our dedicated Member Services Manager, has long been your go-to resource for technical and business support across NGINA's diverse membership. Known for her problem-solving skills and member-first approach, Tara has been leading regular member visits to offer hands-on assistance and strengthen industry connections. Now, our CEO Mike is joining Tara on many of these visits, providing members with the added benefit of leadership engagement and ensuring we're aligned with your needs at every level.

Together, Tara and Mike engage with members on a wide range of topics, including:

- Training courses – chemical, forklift, first aid, social media, retail sales, leadership, truck driving, costings
- e-News, N&G News Magazine, and member blogs
- Free access to the HR Focus's HR Advice Line
- Free recruitment advertising on NGINA's website, social media, and LinkedIn
- Sydney, Northern Rivers, and Mid North Coast Trade Days
- Apprenticeships and industry career pathways
- Biosecurity, plant hygiene, weed, pest, and disease management
- Staff management, retention, and HR support
- Social media, content creation, photo editing, and customer communications
- Networking and professional learning at regional group events, including NextGen, Central Coast/Hunter, Northern Rivers, Mid North Coast, and Sydney

MEMBER VISITS



Abundance Garden Centre

Abundance Garden Centre, on the Mid North Coast, has built a strong reputation for quality plants, pots, garden art, and giftware—many sourced from their own production nursery. Open Wednesday to Sunday, the centre is known for its friendly, expert service and personalised gardening advice.



RETAILER



Café

Boyd's Bay Wholesale Nursery

Since 1980, Boyd's Bay Wholesale Nursery has supplied premium greenstock for residential, commercial, and government projects. With three growing sites and a nationwide supplier network, their expert team delivers an extensive range including palms, natives, succulents, hedging, tropicals, and ex-ground stock across Australia. Their dedicated fleet ensures reliable, efficient delivery for jobs of all sizes.



PRODUCTION



BROMELIADS



SHRUBS & HEDGING



PALMS



TREES



SUCCULENTS

Cameron's Nursery

Located in Arcadia, NSW, Cameron's Nursery has specialised in perennials since 1992. Sonja and her team grow top-quality lines including APG, Aussie Winners, and Colourwave, featuring Rosemary, Lavenders, flowering perennials, and new releases. Their plants are stocked in retail nurseries and major chain stores, with a strong focus on sustainability.



PRODUCTION



FLOWERING PERENNIALS

Eden at Byron

Located in beautiful Byron Bay, Eden at Byron has inspired gardeners for over 25 years. Led by Maree and her knowledgeable team, the centre offers a wide range of plants from herbs, vegies, fruit trees and natives to water plants, seedlings and rare indoor varieties. They also stock plant health products, seeds, bulbs, and pots, with expert advice available every step of the way.



RETAILER

Flower Power Ashtonfield

Located in the Hunter Valley, Flower Power Ashtonfield (formerly Heritage Gardens) is a premier garden centre offering an extensive range of plants, pots, homewares, and garden essentials. Acquired by Flower Power in 2024, this light-filled nursery combines rural charm with modern innovation. The centre features a licensed café serving seasonal menus and high teas, providing a delightful experience amidst the greenery. With a team of experienced horticulturists, Flower Power Ashtonfield is committed to helping customers create their dream gardens.



RETAILER



Café

Golden Gates Nursery

Based in Kenthurst, Golden Gates Nursery is a wholesale grower with over 45 years of experience, known for its outstanding plant range and customer service. Their diverse selection includes indoor favourites, architectural lines, fruit trees, palms, climbers, and advanced shrubs—servicing landscapers, florists, councils, and retailers across NSW.



WHOLESALE

Heritage Plants

Based in the Hunter Region, Heritage Plants is a family-run production nursery that has supplied quality flowering plants and perennials to independent nurseries across NSW and ACT for over 35 years. Known for their standout Hydrangeas, their range also includes Salvias, Fuchsias, Geraniums, Calibrachoa, and more. Nick and the team are committed to delivering plants with excellent shelf life and retail appeal.



PRODUCTION



FLOWERING PERENNIALS



SHRUBS & HEDGING

Honeysuckle Garden Mosman

This stunning Garden Centre has a wide variety of trees, shrubs, perennials, edibles and colour. They hold a range of feature trees, many grown at their own production nursery in a range of sizes including super advanced. They stock a beautiful range of indoor and outdoor pots made from various materials and in many styles and colours. This is clearly the flagship store, a real destination for all gardeners.



RETAILER

Honeysuckle Park Dural

This neat compact growing nursery produces a range of retail quality trees, shrubs and climbers. Much of the stock is destined for their retail outlets but they also have a number of loyal retail, wholesale and landscape customers. Deciduous and evergreen magnolias are their core lines, and they are probably best known for their Magnolia Teddy Bears grown in almost every size.



PRODUCTION



TREES



SHRUBS & HEDGING

MEMBER VISITS!



Independent Garden Centres (IGC)

Independent Garden Centres (IGC) is a cooperative network of locally owned and operated garden centres across Australia. United by a shared passion for quality, value, and expert advice, IGC members offer customers exceptional service and a wide range of plants, pots, garden décor, and giftware. With a strong focus on community and sustainability, IGC supports independent retailers in delivering a personalised garden centre experience, while also providing national marketing support and exclusive IGC Growers' products.

Keith Wallace Nursery

Located in Sydney's Hills District, Keith Wallace Nursery specialises in exceptional indoor plants, ferns, and orchids. Keith, Gordon and the team grow 90% of their stock in-house, including sought-after varieties like Begonias, Epipremnum, and Peperomia. The nursery is also renowned for its Cymbidium Orchids, Gordon's passion project of over 66 years, grown from seed with blooms emerging after 6–7 years.



PRODUCTION

Lederman Insurance Brokers/NGINA Insurance Service

Lederman Insurance Brokers, based in Wahroonga, NSW, has provided tailored insurance solutions for over 30 years. As the appointed managers of the NGINA Insurance Service, they offer industry-specific cover for nurseries and garden centres, including business property, public liability, motor vehicle, personal accident and income protection. Holding their own AFSL, they assist members with expert advice, policy comparisons, and claims support.

Lumpy's Nursery and Landscape Yard

Based in Tuncurry, Lumpy's is a family-owned nursery and landscape yard offering expert advice, diverse plants, garden décor, and bulk landscape supplies. From pots and water features to mulch and aggregates—with delivery available—Lumpy, Jenny and the team support projects big and small. Their gift shop also features unique personal and garden-themed items.



RETAILER



BULK
LANDSCAPE
SUPPLIES

Mojay Pots

With over 40 years of experience, Mojay Pots supplies premium, stylish pots and planters for both indoor and outdoor spaces. Daniel and the team offer a wide range of designs from classic to contemporary built for beauty and durability. Their innovative Augmented Reality (AR) tool lets customers virtually place pots in their space to find the perfect style, size, and colour match.



POTS

Mother Earth Nursery

Mother Earth Nursery is a family-owned garden centre known for top-quality plants and expert advice. They offer a broad range of natives, exotics, indoor plants, and rare varieties, along with garden supplies, décor, and pots. Passionate about helping all gardeners succeed, the team fosters a welcoming, inspiring space. Locations at Cranebrook and Point Clare.



RETAILER



Café

Palm Park Wholesale Nursery

Located on the Far North Coast of NSW, Palm Park is a production nursery supplying quality palms and foliage plants to retail garden centres and wholesalers across Eastern Australia. Their range includes Alpinia, Cordyline, Philodendron, Dyspis, Phoenix, Zamioculcas, and more.



PRODUCTION



PALMS



SHADE PLANTS

Parkers Place Nursery

Parkers Place is a second-generation wholesale nursery in the Northern Rivers, supplying premium plants to retailers across NSW and QLD. Run by Ray and Damien, they grow an extensive range including Renaissance Herbs, Romantic Plants, Camellias, Conifers, Magnolias, Acers, Wisteria, Clivia, and more.



PRODUCTION



SHRUBS &
HEDGING



TREES



HERB & VEG

Patersons Ferns

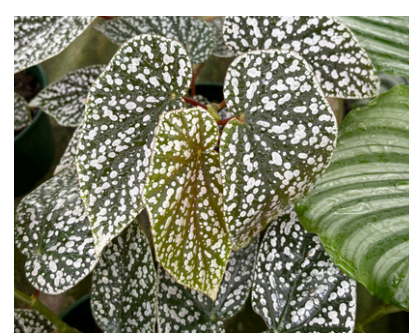
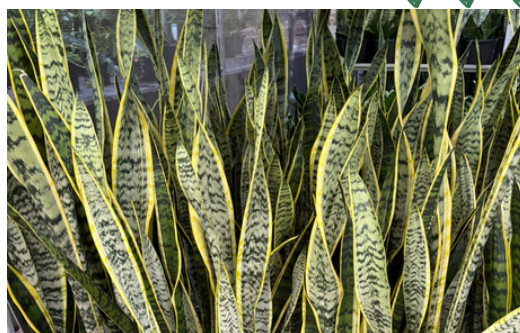
Patersons Ferns is a wholesale nursery in the Hunter region, offering over 90 fern varieties including Adiantum, Asplenium, Athyrium, and Pteris. Grown under a natural canopy without artificial heating, Julia and her team produce hardy, adaptable ferns ideal for retail nurseries, landscapers, and florists.



PRODUCTION



FERNS



MEMBER VISITS?

Port Landscape Supplies and Nursery

Located in Port Macquarie, Port Landscape Supplies and Nursery is a family-owned, one-stop shop for quality plants, landscaping materials, and expert advice. The team offers a wide selection of healthy plants, premium mulch, soil, and more—helping customers create beautiful, functional outdoor spaces. With a coffee van onsite, it's a must-visit for garden lovers.



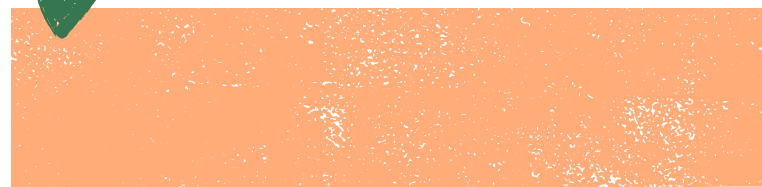
Valley Garden Centre

A trusted, family-run nursery in Kempsey since 1983, Valley Garden Centre offers a diverse selection of hardy natives, flowering plants, shade plants, rare indoor varieties, and aquarium accessories. They also operate a wholesale business supplying premium indoor plants—such as *Monstera*, *Epipremnum*, and *Philodendron*—to landscapers, hire companies, and nurseries. Visit their permanent stand at Sydney Trade Day.



Vanderley Nursery

Located near Port Macquarie, Vanderley Nursery is a leading producer of innovative plants for residential and commercial use. With 18 years at their Sancrox site, John and Carol now grow one of Australia's largest ranges of Bougainvilleas—including Li'l Beauty and Bambino—alongside Euphorbia Little Sparkler, Epipremnum, Geraniums and Mandevillas. Visit their permanent stand at Sydney Trade Day.




29 - 30 July 2025

GOLD COAST TURF CLUB
AND EVENT CENTRE, QLD

Australia's Largest Greenlife Trade-Only Expo

Showcasing an Extensive Range of Horticultural Products


Visitor Registrations **NOW OPEN!**

 Greenlifeindustryqld.org.au

Join us for the

ANNUAL GREEN EXPO GALA DINNER

A night where the industry comes together for networking, collaboration, and a whole lot of fun.

 **29 July 2025**

 **Sea World Resort**



Scan the
QR code to
register!



GETTING TO THE ROOTS OF GROWING TREES

Background

Landscaping is a vital market for the greenlife supply chain. The success of trees planted in landscaping projects is significantly influenced by how they are grown in the production nursery. Best management growing practices are vital for ensuring trees are healthy, well-structured and able to thrive after transplanting.

Root pruning plays a critical role in improving root structure as well as preventing root defects that affect tree establishment and longevity.

The Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) sub-program, Landscape Tree Stock Specification (LTSS), provides essential guidelines for ensuring that trees are grown to meet industry and national standards.

Drawing from local and international research, this nursery paper explores the key practices of root inspections and pruning during tree staging to meet these guidelines.

Root pruning

Root pruning is not a new concept in nursery production, but it has seen continual research and improvement over the years, reinforcing the benefits of this practice.

Root pruning involves the cutting back or removing parts of a tree's root system, typically to improve the tree's root structure and prepare it for transplanting. Research consistently shows that root pruning improves the root ball's health, helping to avoid root circling and girdling issues in container-grown trees. Root pruning encourages lateral root growth, which is vital for long-term tree health (Gilman, et. al. 2016). Effective root pruning at seedling stages has been shown to improve the overall quality and stability of container-grown trees, (Harris, et. al., 1971).

Root pruning benefits

IMPROVES ROOT STRUCTURE

By cutting back poorly formed or circling roots, the root system becomes more fibrous and extensive, allowing for improved anchorage as well as water and nutrient absorption.

REDUCES LANDSCAPE FAILURE

Pruning problematic roots helps the tree establish more quickly in the landscape, minimising failure.

PREVENTS ROOT GIRDLING

One of the key challenges with container-grown trees is root circling, which can eventually strangle the tree's own trunk. Pruning is essential for encouraging outward root growth.



This tree failure was caused by circling roots present in the container. As the trunk and roots increased in size they rested against each other causing the trunk to be thinner below ground, or girdled. Image used with permission Gilman, E. F. and Kempf, B. (2009).

Timing and methods

Root pruning should be done at every staging event with careful attention to timing and technique.

TIMING

Seedling trees being potted into tubes are at risk of J root formation. To mitigate this, prune back long taproots. After initial tubing, prune roots every time a tree is staged (potted on). Pruning during seasons of least growth activity – typically autumn, winter, or early spring – minimises stress on the tree.

METHOD

Remove the outer layer and base of the root system that contains any circling or deflected roots. Use sharp, clean tools (dipped into a disinfectant) to make cuts, ensuring smooth edges that heal quickly and reduce the risk of disease (Gilman and Kempf, 2009).



This young tree has a J root and kinked roots because of poor tubing technique.



J. Amer. Soc. Hort. Sci. 96(1): 105-108. 1971

Seedling Eucalyptus with taproot pruned to allow for tubing and development of more lateral root growth.

What is tree staging?

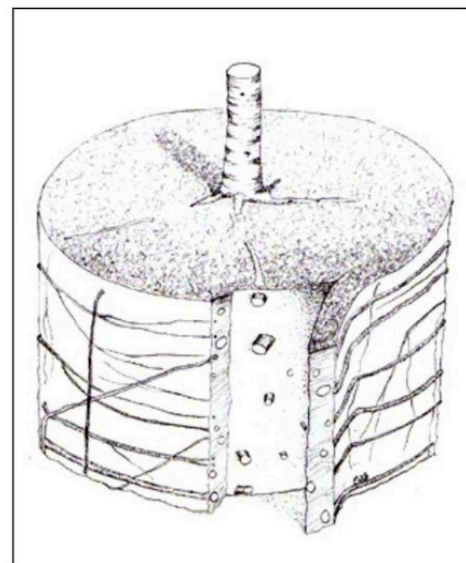
Tree staging involves preparing and managing trees at every potting event during their production in the nursery and at final plant out into the landscape. This ensures trees have strong well-formed root systems, good stem and branch structures, and balanced canopies. The NIASA Landscape Tree Stock Specification outlines the practices, inspections and associated recordkeeping you need to achieve this (NIASA, 2023).

Staging practices

We recommend implementing practices for staging trees that meet NIASA Landscape Tree Stock Specification.

PROPER CONTAINERISATION

Knowing your tree's growth capabilities is vital. Ensure that trees are placed into containers that allow for appropriate root development to meet your production timing. Containers that are too small can restrict root growth and will need to be staged more often, while planting into excessively large containers can lead to media deterioration before the root system occupies the space.



Removing outer circling roots from the periphery and base of the root ball at each staging event allows for lateral growth of the regenerated new roots. Image used with permission - Gilman, E. F. and Kempf, B. (2009)



Examples of air pruning pots.

ROOT PRUNING DURING STAGING

Undertake regular root inspection and pruning throughout the staging process to ensure that the tree's root system remains healthy and free from defects including J roots, kinked roots and circling or girdling roots.

SPACING AND GROWTH CONDITIONS

Trees should be spaced adequately after staging to avoid competition for light, ensuring that each tree has enough space to develop a healthy trunk and canopy.

WATERING AND FERTILISATION

Proper irrigation and fertilisation are necessary to maintain optimal growth conditions. It is important to avoid overwatering, which can impede healthy root development and increase root disease issues.

Container choices

Choosing the right container to suit your crop and your production methods is important.

PLAIN WALLED NURSERY POTS

Standard nursery pots come in many shapes and sizes but tend not to have any positive impact on tree root structure when compared with other types. Roots tend to circle and deflect.

AIR PRUNING POTS

These pots also come in a variety of shapes and sizes but tend to have positive impacts on tree root structure. Roots that get to the outer edge of the pot are dried out by the air and effectively pruned, limiting circling roots. They tend to dry out more quickly than plain pots.

OPEN BASE POTS

Some pot styles mentioned above have very open bases. These generally air prune large downward growing roots if they are not sitting directly on the growing bed. The development of lateral roots along the length of these roots is then encouraged. Most tree tubes used by propagators have this base type.

WOVEN BAGS

These come in both closed weave poly types and more open fabric types. The open fabric types can air prune whereas the woven poly bags tend not to. As these are generally cost-effective they are often used as the finishing container before landscape planting. It is important that at this final stage, trees are planted before major root defects can develop. Those planting these trees out should also be checking and pruning roots, as required, to improve root development during establishment in the landscape. Additionally, planting trees too deeply can encourage girdling root formation.

Health monitoring and management

Monitoring crop health is vital during tree production.

PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Regularly check trees for pests and diseases, both above and below the media surface, to ensure that they are not compromised during production.

ROOT INSPECTIONS

Carry out routine inspections of the root ball during staging events. This simple task can help identify signs of circling, girdling or other root issues before they impact tree growth (NIASA, 2023)

Documentation and traceability

Maintaining records is essential for demonstrating crop source and compliance with specifications or standards. This includes detailed documentation of:

- » propagation
- » staging events
- » tree inspections and pruning activities
- » treatment for any pests or diseases (NIASA, 2023).



Conclusion

Root pruning and staging are critical components of growing high-quality landscape trees. By following the research-based guidance in the NIASA Landscape Tree Stock Specification, production nurseries can produce trees that meet the Australian standard, are healthy, well-formed, and ready to perform in urban landscapes.



An example of a well formed root system with many lateral roots formed and maintained after initial root pruning.



Well structured, healthy trees ready for landscape planting.

ATTRIBUTION

Hort Innovation funded project 'National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program' (NY20001), using the Hort Innovation nursery levy, matched by the Australian Government.

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- NIASA. (2023). *NIASA Guidelines, Appendix 14 - Landscape Tree Stock Specification*. Greenlife Industry Australia.

MORE INFORMATION, LINKS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Past editions of nursery papers are available online on the Greenlife Industry Australia website: www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/communications-centre?category=nursery-papers

INDUSTRY EVENTS



SYDNEY GROUP THINK TANK

The Sydney Group Industry Think Tank, held on Wednesday 14 May, brought together key stakeholders from across the horticulture sector including production nurseries, retail garden centres, allied suppliers, consultants, and association partners for a collaborative evening aimed at shaping the future of the industry. With expert presentations, interactive discussions, and participant-led insights, the event tackled pressing topics such as digital transformation, shifting consumer behaviour, structural challenges, and opportunities for supply chain collaboration. Regional attendees added valuable perspective, highlighting the importance of inclusive engagement beyond metropolitan areas.

Key insights included the urgent need for mobile-first websites, having more of a digital presence, and lifestyle marketing to engage under-35s (emphasised by Leisha Jordan); the potential of co-branded marketing to help independent retailers scale their visibility without losing their identity (proposed by Evan Mueller); and the growing risks posed by land pressures and succession challenges, with many closures linked more to these factors than direct retail competition (outlined by Christina Gnezdiloff). A sobering data point from Josh at Moshi revealed that over 150 nurseries have closed since late 2023, largely due to the absence of business plans, pricing strategies, or productivity frameworks.

The event's key themes reinforced that digital transformation and storytelling are no longer optional, collaboration from co-marketing to shared logistics is essential, isolation must be addressed through better regional connections, and future success hinges on adaptable, well-planned, experience-driven retail. Moving forward, NGINA will support a "coalition of the willing" to explore co-branded marketing initiatives, regional collaboration and freight models, and expanded digital training and shared promotional efforts.



PULLING BACK THE SHADE CLOTH AT BOYDS BAY GROUP

The Northern Rivers Group hosted its Pulling Back the Shade Cloth event on Friday, 2 May, with the Boyds Bay Group generously opening the doors to their three nursery sites along the NSW/QLD border. Around 35 growers and allied industry representatives joined NGINA CEO Mike Mehigan and Colin Fruk from Green Industries Queensland (GIQ) for a fascinating tour that showcased impressive stock, innovative growing practices, and the operational insights of a leading landscaping nursery business. The event was well-attended by local members and guests, fostering valuable knowledge sharing and lively discussions. Special thanks go to the Boyds Bay team — John, Glenn, and Ian — for their warm hospitality and for hosting a relaxed barbecue that gave everyone the chance to unwind and network.



MID NORTH COAST REGION GROUP

The Mid North Coast Region Group met on Wednesday 30 April 2025 to catch up, network and plan the upcoming Kempsey Trade Day, confirming the venue, site logistics, and member support roles. Key topics included site access, catering, overnight security, trolley availability, and promotion, with NGINA to manage event bookings. A regional survey was also launched to assess interest in a second trade day in Autumn 2026 and identify local training needs. Thank you to everyone who attended, it was terrific to see some new faces join the group. A special thank you to Sandra from Exotic Flora Nursery for her efforts in reaching out to nurseries across the region; we were thrilled with the strong turnout of 33 attendees.

MOSHIE BUSINESS RESILIENCE WORKSHOP

The Moshie Business Resilience Workshop recently held in Ballina, funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), provided attendees with clear, practical, and highly relevant strategies tailored to the needs of both wholesale and retail businesses in the Nursery and Garden Industry. The presenters showcased a deep understanding of the industry and its unique challenges, offering tools and insights designed to strengthen business resilience. Members who participated are encouraged to begin implementing the strategies shared during the workshop to help future-proof their operations.

EASTER SHOW

This year marked NGINA's exciting return to the Royal Easter Show in Sydney after nearly 15 years — a major milestone for the association and a fantastic opportunity to showcase the horticulture industry to a massive public audience. With the Easter Show drawing nearly 900,000 visitors, it provided the perfect platform to promote the importance of plants and gardens, highlight career pathways in horticulture, and shine a spotlight on our members.

NGINA proudly supported the 'Plant in a Cup' promotion, where the public could bring used coffee cups and drink containers to be repurposed by planting a seedling inside, a creative and fun initiative that promoted both sustainability and gardening. Volunteers also offered general horticultural advice and raised awareness of our Retailers and career opportunities.

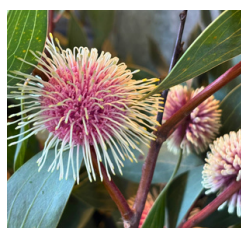
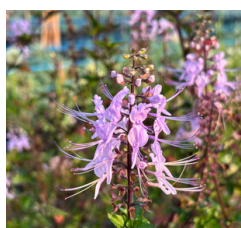
A huge thank you goes out to all the volunteers who generously gave their time, and to our incredible supporters: Oasis for growing the plants, Grange Growing Solutions for supplying the potting mix, and Royston Petrie Seeds. We're already looking forward to making this promotion even bigger and better at future shows!



CENTRAL COAST & HUNTER GROUP NETWORKING EVENT

The East Coast Wildflowers Tour & Networking Dinner in March was a fantastic success, bringing together industry professionals for an evening filled with learning, connection, and inspiration. Attendees enjoyed an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of East Coast Wildflowers, one of NSW's premier native flower nurseries, renowned for cultivating over 100 species for the wholesale cut flower market. The tour showcased a breathtaking array of Australian flora making for a truly immersive experience.

Industry experts Craig Scott (Owner, fourth-generation flower grower) and Jonathan Lidbetter (Production Manager) shared valuable insights into the world of native flower production, discussing both the challenges and exciting opportunities facing the market today. The evening wrapped up with a networking dinner at Mangrove Mountain Memorial Club, where attendees exchanged ideas, built new connections, and explored the future of the native flower industry. A huge thank you to everyone who joined and made the night such a memorable success!





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If you don't have your Member Centre password, please contact our office by phone or email and we'll assist you with a password reset.



NEW MEMBER

Based in the beautiful Hills District region of NSW, Green E Roses is a leading production nursery specialising in premium-quality rose plants. With over 40 years of growing expertise, they pride themselves on producing healthy, vigorous roses for wholesale and retail customers nationwide.

Their extensive range includes:

- Bush roses
- Climbing roses
- Standard roses
- Weeping standard roses

Available in hybrid tea and floribunda style

They also stock a beautiful selection of David Austin English roses, prized for their old-world charm, full petal form, and exquisite fragrance, as well as a range of Old World and Heritage roses, perfect for gardeners seeking romantic, traditional blooms with strong perfume and historical character.

Green E Roses offers roses all year, as they are in pots. Their commitment to sustainable production and excellent customer service has earned them a trusted reputation with nurseries and garden centres across Australia.



Website



Instagram



Facebook



NEW MEMBER

This local family-owned business is fast becoming the go to for both professional landscapers and home gardeners in the Port Macquarie region. Their on-site nursery boasts a diverse selection of plants, including flowers, herbs, vegetables, hedges, succulents, and Australian native species. Complementing their plant offerings are a range of gardening essentials such as pots (glazed, terracotta, concrete, and plastic), planters, water features, bird baths, statues, FormBoss® steel garden edging, and a variety of fertilisers.

Beyond the nursery, Port Landscape Supplies provides an extensive array of landscaping materials, including decorative gravel, mulch, soil, masonry products, and building supplies. Their commitment to quality and customer service ensures that clients receive expert advice and reliable products for every project.

Need a coffee? Try their onsite drive through coffee.

Website



Facebook





NEW MEMBER



Dirty Gloves Nursery is a small, family-run business proudly nestled in Parkes, in the heart of Central West NSW. Owned and operated by Mitch and Casey Miles, along with their three young children: Finn (6), Noah (4), and Harper (2)

Dirty Gloves Nursery prides itself on offering affordable, quality plants, fruits, and vegetables to locals and surrounding communities.

With a strong belief in the value of homegrown produce and sustainable living, Mitch and Casey are passionate about helping others build thriving gardens. Dirty Gloves Nursery services not only Parkes but also the wider Central West and Far West communities of NSW, where access to nurseries and fresh produce can often be limited.

By sharing their knowledge, quality plants, and love of gardening, Dirty Gloves Nursery is committed to supporting smaller communities, promoting healthy living, and inspiring the next generation of gardeners. Every plant, fruit, and vegetable is grown with care, ensuring customers receive the very best to help their gardens and communities grow strong.

Facebook



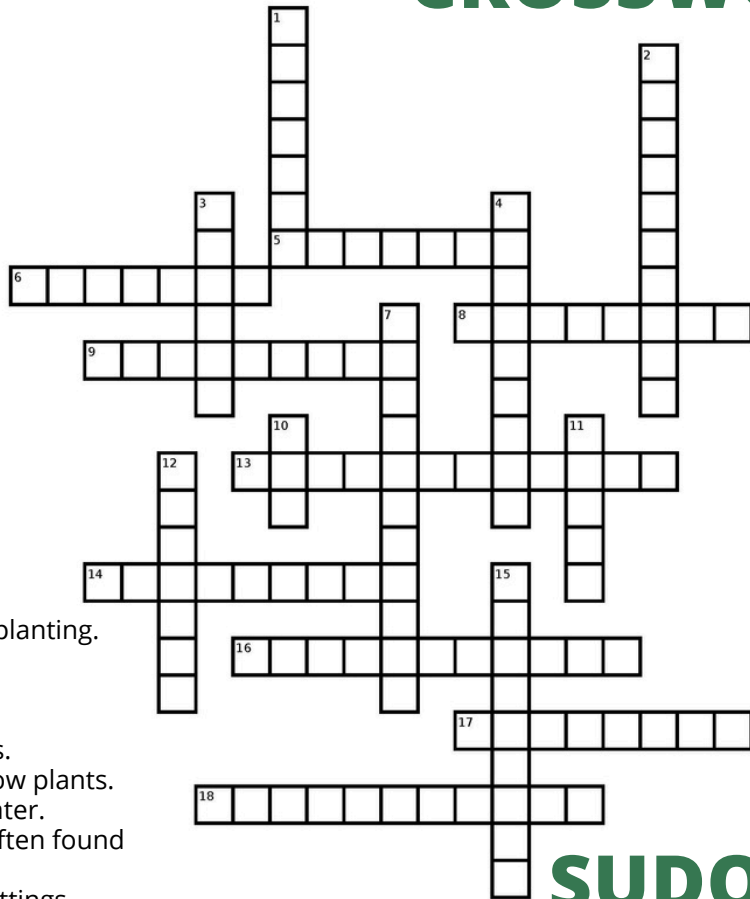
CROSSWORD

DOWN

- [1] Organic material used to enrich soil.
- [2] System of watering plants artificially.
- [3] The process of a plant increasing in size.
- [4] A cultivated plant grown for food or other use.
- [7] The beginning of a plant's life cycle.
- [10] Container used to grow plants.
- [11] Material spread over the soil to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- [12] Substance added to soil to improve plant growth.
- [15] Chemical used to prevent fungal diseases in plants.

ACROSS

- [5] Turning over the soil to prepare it for planting.
- [6] The flower of a plant.
- [8] A young plant grown from seed.
- [9] Chemical used to kill pests on plants.
- [13] The science and art of growing plants.
- [14] A small plot of land where people grow plants.
- [16] Growing plants without soil, using water.
- [17] Essential nutrient for plant growth, often found in fertilisers
- [18] Reproducing plants from seeds or cuttings.



SUDOKU

LEVEL: MEDIUM

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Best For Retailers

CERTIFICATE III IN NURSERY OPERATIONS (RETAIL NURSERY) AHC31124-03 | TAFE NSW

Learning outcomes

Through a mixture of theory and practical course work, learn to:

- Engage with customers and assist them with their plant and plant product questions in a retail nursery setting
- Identify plants and understand plant nutrition and maintenance
- Distinguish between and recommend different growing mediums
- Manage visual merchandising and marketing activities in a nursery setting
- Control pests, diseases and disorders in plants
- Repair irrigation systems

SCAN
ME! >>>



Best For Production workers

CERTIFICATE III IN NURSERY OPERATIONS (NURSERY PRODUCTION) AHC31124-02 | TAFE NSW

Learning outcomes

Through a mixture of theory and practical course work, learn to:

- Develop and implement plant care programs in production nurseries
- Grow a range of specialised plants including bonsais, topiaries and sculptural plants
- Use integrated pest management principles to control pests, diseases and weeds
- Analyse potting mix and implement plant nutritional programs
- Transport, store and apply chemicals in production
- Maintain and troubleshoot pressurised irrigation systems

So far, Students in 2025 have enjoyed a field excursion to Grange Growing Solutions, networking at May Trade day and attending industry-based workshops for Chemical and Irrigation training. Who said learning wasn't fun?

Courses start: 23rd July | Study Options: At your workplace attending online classes every Wednesday 10am - 12pm, complete work-based projects and attend 2 x 4 day workshops, over 2 years at Wollongbar or Richmond campus.
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FROM PLANT TO PLATE

With Mike Mehigan

Our new CEO Mike Mehigan is bringing a little taste of English culture to the table, quite literally! This traditional-style sausage and potato pie, courtesy of Mike and Susan, comes with a health warning: it's dangerously delicious and might just become your new winter favourite.

Just in time for winter, this is a hearty and comforting meal, perfect for a cosy evening. This dish embodies the essence of comfort food combining savoury sausages, creamy potatoes, and tender cabbage in a rich, flavourful sauce. It's sure to win over anyone who loves classic, satisfying home cooking. Dig in and enjoy, just don't blame us if you go back for seconds!

Ingredients

IRISH SAUSAGE AND POTATO PIE

Prep Time: 30 mins **Cook Time:** 1hr 45min **Serves:** 6

- 12 thick pork sausages
- 115g unsalted butter
- 2 large onions, finely sliced
- 175g bacon lardons
- 225g savoy cabbage, finely shredded
- 1.3kg baking potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 570ml double cream
- 425ml beef stock
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. **Preheat your oven** to 170°C (fan-forced).
2. **Brown the sausages** in a non-stick pan over medium heat for around 10 minutes or until cooked through and golden. Remove and cut each into three pieces on an angle.
3. **Sauté the onions** in half the butter over medium heat for about 10 minutes until soft. Remove and set aside.
4. **Add bacon** to the pan and cook until crisp, about 4 minutes. Stir in the cabbage with a splash of water and cook for another 2–3 minutes until wilted. Drain off any excess fat.
5. **Grease a large baking dish** with a portion of the remaining butter.
6. **Layer the pie** in the dish:
 - Begin with a layer of potato slices, season with salt, pepper, and a little thyme.
 - Add some sausage, then some of the onions.
 - Repeat layers, adding cabbage and bacon to the middle layer.
 - Continue layering, ending with a top layer of potato, seasoned with thyme, salt and pepper.
7. **Heat the cream and beef stock** in a saucepan with the bay leaves until just below boiling. Remove the bay leaves and pour the liquid over the layered dish — it should come just to the top of the final potato layer.
8. **Dot the top with butter**, cover the dish with foil, and place on a baking tray. Bake for 1 hour and 45 minutes.
9. **Uncover and increase the heat** to 200°C. Bake for an extra 15 minutes to brown the top.
10. **Serve hot** with a side salad or crusty bread.

Thank you to our NGINA Partners

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By partnering with us:

- ✓ **Your brand** will gain the benefit of reflected trust and authority, which is the cornerstone of the relationship between NGINA and its members.
- ✓ **Your business** will benefit from the opportunity of open communication with decision makers and key people in NSW and ACT's nursery and garden industry.

NGINA Partner Benefits can include *

- NGINA membership
- Display NGINA partnership logo on any of your print and digital marketing collateral
- Opportunity to speak at a Regional Group event
- CEO and/or NGINA Director escorted visits to meet with NGINA members
- Fulfilment report (a formal report that shows you exactly how we delivered on our promise)
- Advertising and Marketing
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- Sydney Trade Day
Advertising on Trade Day flyer | FREE exhibitor stand | FREE roaming stand | display promotional material | hand out promotional material/showbags
- Representation at other NGINA Events
Complimentary tickets to awards night and gala dinner | Opportunity to speak at events | Presentation of an award | Major key partner recognition at events | Logo on event promotional material | Complimentary tickets to other NGINA networking events | Logo on pull-up partner banner at all events

Partnership Opportunities

Off-The-Shelf Packages

We offer various partnership packages; **diamond, platinum, gold, silver and bronze** all of which offer year-round access and exposure to NGINA members through events, print and digital media, and exclusive networking opportunities.

Customised Packages

In the event our off-the-shelf packages don't provide exactly what you're looking for, NGINA's flexible approach means that together we can tailor a package that meets your needs and requirements. To discuss this option further please call the office on (02) 9679 1472. All partners will receive a fulfilment report at the end of the 12-month period.

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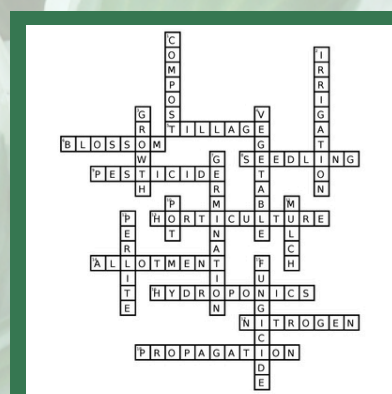


ANSWERS

SUDOKU

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