

What's Growing On



Nursery & Garden Industry
South Australia

AUTUMN|2018



National Conference



Nursery & Garden Industry
South Australia

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On the cover

The national conference for the Nursery and Garden Industry was held in Hobart in February. There were several South Australian delegates. Seen on the front cover are (l) Brett Draper, Garden Centre Manager at Barrow & Bench Mitre 10 Malvern and (r) Malcolm Lewis from Lewis Horticulture. Malcolm is a Life Member of both NGISA and NGIA.

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PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



National Conference - plenty for retailers and growers

The Nursery and Garden industry national conference is now held every two years and this year it was Tasmania's turn to host it, on the shores of the Derwent River in Hobart.

The conference program had something in for almost everyone – good marketing advice for retailers and growers, workshops in plant propagation, scary future predictions and inspirational presentations.

As well the venue, the Wrest Point conference centre, had excellent facilities for the trade exhibition which had nearly 30 stands representing a wide variety of businesses and services.

Among the speakers some of the highlights were:

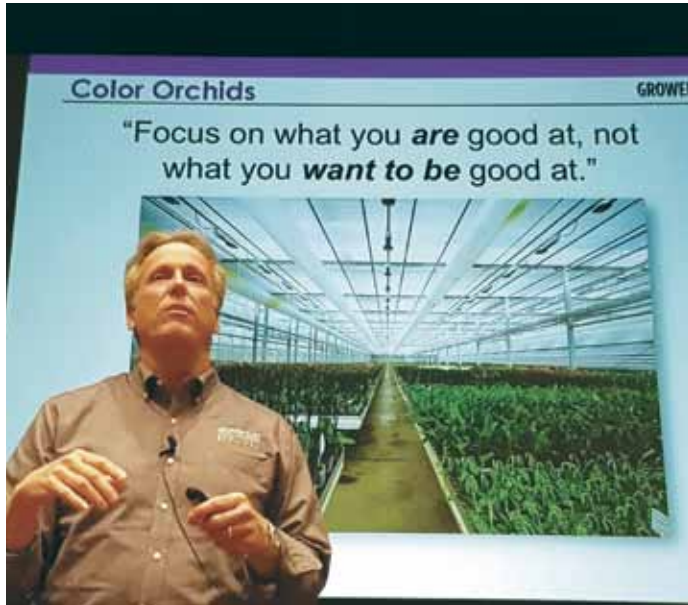
- Chris Beytes, Editor of Grower Talks from Ball Publishing in the US. He gave three addresses talking about the trends that are happening overseas, innovating management and marketing strategies, and the future for nursery and greenhouse crops (*see separate story*)
- Dr Lousie Grimmer who spoke on the trends shaping the way we shop – being mobile, convenience, serving technology, the 'need for speed' and 'let's get physical'
- Ms Rose Herceg, a futurist who told of fascinating research being conducted in the US where they can predict what our shopping and personal habits are by the way we walk and where an injection of chemical into part of the brain can automatically have a person speaking fluently in another language
- Ms Kerri-Lyn Peachy from the University of Sydney who talked about managing the pressures of farming
- Mr Mark McCrindle, researcher who told us that in 1997 that face to face time equalled screen time (using computer, laptop or smart phone) and now the screen time far surpasses face to face time



South Australian delegates, Luke Francis and wife, Mel Dalton, Chantal and Peter Jong.

- Mr Ben Peacock from the Republic of Everyone who are managing the 2020 campaign reported on its activities to date and their success
- Mr Angus Stewart who talked about the art and science of plant breeding and new technologies and techniques in plant propagation
- Mr Paul de Gelder, a former navy diver who was mauled by a shark in Sydney Harbour and lost his whole right leg and hand and how he had improvised, adapted and overcome the obstacles that the attack had created for him.

Masterclasses were conducted, Peter Vaughan CEO of NGIA gave an update on their activities and John McDonald



Chris Beytes, editor of Grower Talks.

outlined the Nursery Industry Biosecurity Program, among the many other speakers over the two full days of the conference.



A casual dinner at the Hobart Brewery was a highlight of the social program. Seen here are (l to r) Luke Francis, Malcolm Lewis, Peter Jong, Geoffrey Fuller, Chantal Jong, David Eaton, Mel Dalton, Grant Dalwood and Neville Sloss.



Value of the Nursery & Garden Industry

Mr Jan Paul van Moort conducted a research project for our industry to show how much it is worth to the economy of Australia. The research showed that the industry:

- Is worth \$2.2billion
- Has over 1777 businesses
- employs 23,000 people
- produces 1.6billion plants a year
- has more than 6,200 hectares of outdoor production
- & over 1,200 hectares of indoor production

Useful messages for growers and retailers

As editor of Grower Talks, Chris Beytes gets to meet many nurserymen and retailers around the United States and beyond and from his experiences had some key messages for the conference from his presentations.

He told the audience that they should focus on 'what they are good at, not what they want to be good at'. He gave the example of a grower of orchids who decided that growing was better handled by a specialist

nursery and repackaged his business into growing on and then marketing the product.

"He then only needed 7,000 square feet of space instead of 66,000 and turned the stock over in 10 weeks not 80! In addition, he cut his labour force by more than half," Chris said.

He said it was important to run a business based upon your personality and hire like-minded people and reward with opportunity.

Another example he cited was of a business, Live Trends Designs, which in three years had built up to an annual turnover of \$12m.

"For them it was not about pot size – it was all about the look. They specialised on design and marketing and create more than 400 lines a year."

Chris had some final words for anyone in the nursery and garden business:

"Be focussed, listen to your employees and customers, respect everyone and have a vision - know why you do it"



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President's Report

By the time you are reading this I am sure we would have had a most successful Trade Day, so thank you to all for making the new venue a great option to our regular Urrbrae site.

My time of late has been very busy with Garden City Plastics and I was unable to attend the national conference and meeting immediately following in Hobart.

From the feedback I have received the general consensus of the conference session was that delegates was to move forward and take the national unity forward. This was echoed in the meeting of the state associations and national office, but with further work to be done on the financial modelling.

Your South Australian board remains firmly committed to a fully transparent and honest appraisal of the figures and the different possibilities before confirming any commitment to the new model. Why would we support a model that didn't stack up financially then fold in a few years?

We are happy to continue to work with the other states and the national body to see if there is a solution that not only works financially, but does truly offer you the members better benefits.

It has been decided to take the issue to all the members for a vote later on this year, so until we are convinced that members benefit and the new body can stand on its own finances, then we will not be recommending a yes vote to you.

On the local front we have had a dry end to summer and we start autumn looking for some good rainfall to help with autumn sales.

I believe that, gods willing weather-wise, that we and our members should have another solid year here in South Australia. We have a great magazine which is supported by and promoted by you the membership, some excellent sponsors who give us their support and a stable membership base to move ahead confidently.

All the best for autumn!

Graham Brown, President - NGISA

EMPLOYMENT

Nursery Manager, Greening Australia

We require a nursery manager to oversee the native plants wholesale nursery at Pasadena SA.

Skills:

- Native plant nursery management experience or similar
- Volunteer coordination
- Business development
- \$50-60K depending on skill set.

For more information or to apply email Luke Kingston:
Lkingston@greeningaustralia.org.au



Neonicotinoids use



and honey bees



Bunnings are removing insecticides that contain neonicotinoids that they sell from their aisles by end of 2018, as well as asking growers to stop putting them on plants that they sell to Bunnings by the end of 2020.

Where there are biosecurity reasons that mandate the use of neonicotinoids such as interstate plant movement, their use for this purpose will always be exempt, says Bunnings.

Nursery & Garden Industry of SA does not agree with this decision (echoed by other state associations) which Bunnings says it has reached independently, despite a petition to them with 25,000 signatures calling for the banning of neonicotinoids.

But all neonicotinoids registered for use in Australia have been through the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)'s robust chemical risk assessment process and are safe and effective - provided products are used as per the label instructions, they say. NGISA recognises the work undertaken by APVMA and supports the current position - **the number of products registered by the APVMA that contain neonicotinoids are effective and safe when used according to the label directions.** All current products containing neonicotinoids approved by the APVMA can be sold or used by members.

In 2014 the APVMA published a report 'Overview report on bee health and the use of neonicotinoids in Australia' with a particular focus on the use of neonicotinoid insecticides and on January 12 this year said after reviewing new studies and given that Australian honey bee health is good, there is no cause for restrictions here in Australia, like those in Europe.

We encourage all retail members to educate consumers on the correct and safe use of these products as well as other insecticide products at time of purchase.

We also support grower members who find that neonicotinoid products are suited to the insect management of their crops and wish to continue to use these products to label, despite Bunnings decree to growers about ceasing the use of them by 2020.

NGISA remains conscious of the need to monitor any new research which may change current thinking and practices on the use of neonicotinoid products, or any other insecticide products, and act accordingly if needed to remove any products from sale or use which pose proven risks.



Australian Flora for Horticulture



Native Plant Wholesalers is one of Australia's larger native plant growers and proudly based in South Australia near Mount Gambier. Begun 30 years ago by Australian native plant enthusiast, Phillip Dowling, the nursery now has 6 hectares of growing area producing over 800,000 plants per annum in 140mm and 200mm pots. A staff of more than 30 full-time and casuals, work with Phillip and nursery Manager Jason Dawe to produce and promote Australian flora for horticulture.



Native Plant Wholesalers has been a NGISA Member since 2000, an NIASA accredited nursery since 2009 and in 2011 achieved Biosecure HACCP certification. An extensive stocklist is available on the Native Plant Wholesalers website which is updated weekly for ordering. We offer quick and efficient delivery.

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CEO's Report



The new autumn season is certainly looked forward to, SA has had it's normal long hot summer, less than a quarter of our average of 40mm in January & February 2018, and with the extended forecast expecting that we will not receive season opening rains until May, there is a concern that generally good summer trading may be slowed.

We are all doing our best to promote the positive autumn season planting times pre winter, production nurseries are busy potting and forward sales seem to be good, as well as eating into recently potted stock that has reacted well to the continued sunshine.

The Bunnings group have appointed a new greenlife buyer here in SA, and we thank Kym Boaden for his long association with our growers. Kym grew up in the industry here in SA.

In the office we have been busy putting together the Autumn SA Gardens Magazine articles as well as this edition of WGO, the 5aa Green Room sessions are a great way for a number of our AGCAS centres to further promote themselves and to enhance their staff training in media. We have a couple of good young Uni students working to gain experience as well as etching out stories about our sometimes forgotten smaller members. Emma Heidenreich who was one of our student interns a couple of years ago and she has completed her Masters degree and now does some commercial work for us also.

The non-acceptance of certain chemicals for home use and eventually in the production cycle is we consider a very poor and unfair decision and hopefully the Independent garden centres can use it to their advantage. We firmly believe that the APVMA, who are chartered by the Federal Government to research these issues has articulated the facts for Australian use and we will wait further technological developments for alternatives.

And of course the seemingly never ending Industry structure review grinds on, we like other state associations are being very diligent in not allowing a "let's just do it" attitude prevail, it would be in my opinion quite suicidal financially as well for member benefits (and that is what we work for) to barge into a change that is not costed correctly.

Grant Dalwood



Profile: John Zwar

After 50 years' dedication to the South Australian horticulture industry, John Zwar's story is captivating with a highlight being his vision for the Port Augusta Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden (AALBG) coming to fruition after a long and rousing campaign.

John retired in February from TAFE SA to spend more time with family and hopes to travel. When asked what drove him to be interested in horticulture unique to South Australia, he simply answered: 'It's my passion; it's just what I do!'

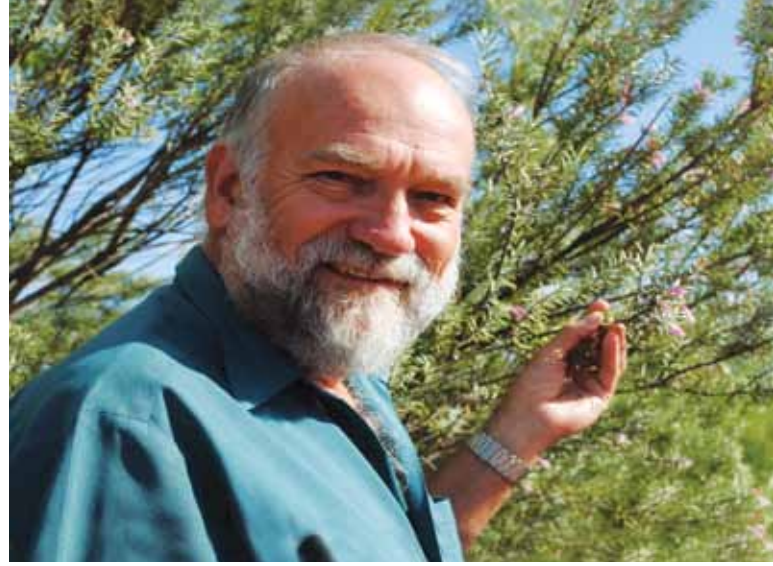
In 1972, following a four-year traineeship in Advanced Amenity Horticulture at the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and work at Falg's Nurseries in Uraidla and West Croydon, as well as Carl Engel's Nursery in West Croydon, John accepted a position as Horticultural Advisor at the Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA) in Leigh Creek, re-establishing the area's nursery and advising ETSA employees and residents.

Two years later, he took an opportunity of a lifetime and relocated from the desert landscape to become Curator of the National Botanic Garden in Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG), supervising 60 staff over 200 acres of equatorial and tropical plants. In 1974, PNG's imminent independence and John's job uncertainty led to him being offered two positions in Australia. He accepted the role with the City of Port Augusta, over another prospect in Darwin, where his fiancé was teaching. He moved with her to Adelaide and they were married after Cyclone Tracey blew through Darwin.

John's role was to improve the dusty, derelict areas of the town through a large tree planting program, as well as landscaping and developing reserves and public areas to prepare for expected population growth. In 1978, John was awarded a six month Churchill Fellowship study tour of arid zone horticulture in similar regions to Port Augusta, in South and North America, Israel and Southern Africa.

On return, he proposed his vision for the AALBG to the Port Augusta City Council which met with pushback. John established a Friends group in 1984 and promoted the concept and got involved with petitions and fundraising to site visits to presentations.

While the State government approved the concept, but with no funding there was only slow and sporadic progress. Eventually the Council developed a working group and supplied small grants and the Western Mining Company (WMC) became involved and funded early site work. John left Port Augusta after 15 years in frustration and took a position at the new mining region of Roxby Downs to become Horticulturalist and eventually Senior Environmental Scientist at WMC.



The next 18 years saw John responsible for the plant nursery, company landscaping efforts and environmental inductions and education for the workforce, local schools and community, as well as water conservation projects. WMC became a corporate sponsor for the AALBG and allowed John to continue his involvement in the project. Over 20 years, WMC would put forward a million dollars to the development of the AALBG, which opened to the public in 1996. The Garden boasts 100,000 visitors a year and has won numerous environmental awards and international praise. In 2016, The AALBG averted being cut by the Council and John continues as President of the Friends of the AALBG as the site continues to excel.

When retrenched by WMC in 2005, John worked at the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden as a Senior Gardener before becoming a Lecturer at TAFE SA Urrbrae Campus for the next 12 years, educating in Horticulture, Conservation and Land Management and other related fields. In that time, he served on numerous boards and committees including the Nursery and Garden Industry of South Australia, Australia's Open Garden Scheme and the AALBG Reference Group.

John Zwar is the exemplar of someone who followed their passion through their work while also giving back to South Australia's horticulture community.

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SMALL MEMBERS

- Profiles

This issue we speak with some of our smaller members who you may not know or heard from lately in our industry...

The Earth Works, Berri - retailer



Di Marshall with her long time staffer, John Neal.

Since 1994, Di Marshall has owned and curated one of South Australia's leading regional garden centres, The Earth Works, in the Riverland town of Berri.

"I first came to Berri in the 80s and I immediately loved it, the weather, the people and being close to the river – Berri truly is the hub of the Riverland," says Di.

From humble beginnings, Di and her then-business partner also focused on showcasing local art - "we had what seemed a huge showroom and a small budget, so we let the local artisans fill it for us! We had an amalgamation of local art and craft, from Aboriginal basket weaving and painting, to pottery, leadlight and folk art," says Di.

In the late 90s, Di made the decision to buy out her partner and set out on the journey of sole ownership of the Garden Centre joining the Plants Plus Group in the process. 'Business certainly changed moving her focus to the layout of the garden centre, plant stock, signage and stock merchandising.

This culminated in winning a state Nursery Industry Award for Cross Merchandising in 2004 and Best Small Garden Centre in SA in 2007 and 2011. "It was fantastic to win an award of such notoriety in such a small country town. It's hard work running a garden centre, but it's so rewarding and I do love what I do', she says.

Di has formal qualifications in horticulture but draws on decades of experience working with plants, which she says is critical to working in regional Australia. "It's service and

knowledge that brings people back, you have to have local knowledge to help people out, especially with a climate like ours and the landscape," says Di.

"Our clientele are extremely mixed, some people want English rose gardens and some want natives. But everything needs to be hardy, it can get up to 46°C degrees on a summer's day and -6°C in winter!," she laughs.

It's the combination of fantastic service and knowledge that draws the community and surrounding townships to The Earth Works and despite the opening of Bunnings Warehouse in the town centre 12 months ago, Di says business is starting to bounce back and she is looking forward to what the nursery's future holds.

"I really appreciate being a member NGISA, I think it's an important group to be part of, we need bigger industry bodies to take care of little businesses, because that's where you get the best local knowledge and support," says Di.

Precision Nursery, Hectorville - Production nursery



A family affair - Pam and Chris Ayles at work in the nursery.

Since 1945, Precision Nursery in Adelaide's northeast has remained one of South Australia's premier suburban production nurseries. It's now a rarity as proximity to the city that has seen many production nurseries in urban areas fail to compete with soaring land value.

Owners, Pam and husband Chris Ayles, explain, "because of where we are located, the property value exceeds the business value. We're not spring chickens, so our future here is fairly immediate."

Despite this reality, there is no doubt that the years of love, care and knowledge that Chris, Pam and her family have poured into the business, has left its mark on the community. "My parents, Rex and Vera, started a cut-flower business here', says Pam. 'In the late 60s though, indoor plants became more popular than flowers, so we started focusing on indoor plants."

“Over the years, indoor plants have fluctuated in popularity. At times, we only just survived. We just stuck at it. But now indoor plants are really starting to become popular... and we have waiting lists!” she laughs. Popular plants include Devil’s Ivy, Peperomias, Sanseverias and, of course, the Fiddle Leaf Fig.

“The glasshouses you see out the front were state-of-the-art in their time’, says Chris. ‘They’re called Right Light glasshouses – they let the sun in at just the right angle, so that our plants get the right amount of sun year-round and through each season’, adds Pam.

Their horticultural knowledge stems from almost 30 years of experience. ‘People expect to be able to grow things without knowledge’, says Pam. ‘Knowing exactly how to water and where to position your plant is critical, lots of people kill their indoor plants with kindness’, she laughs. Chris and Pam would agree that the primary challenge most indoor plant first-timers face are the trends in indoor plants versus what actually works in the Australian climate. ‘You see people going for the pretty things that aren’t necessarily practical or hardy’, says Pam. ‘Anything that’s rare and hard to grow seems to be in fashion at the moment, especially on Instagram!’ Chris laughs.



Precision’s pet and watch dog, Zara on alert in the nursery.

Yankalilla Landscaping and Garden Centre - retailers



The entrance to Yankalilla Garden Centre.

Situated on the picturesque Fleurieu Peninsula, Yankalilla Landscaping and Garden Centre is one of the oldest and most established of its kind in the region. The company began in 1985 but current owner Peter Baldock took over six years ago - conglomerating his landscaping business, Baldock Earth Moving, with the nursery.

“Back then, my speciality was more in-line with civil construction, but I had always been a bit green,” says Peter.

The business has benefited significantly from Peter’s combination of nursery and landscaping services. “It makes places like this a one stop shop for people, they get all the information, products and help they need in one place,” he says.

In addition, the Yankalilla Development Plan, consolidated in 2016, has seen the steady growth of housing developments in the area. Peter and his team work in conjunction with corporate and individual clients, to serve both old and new community members. “We have good contacts with the local builders and we know what works in the area. There is a great deal of knowledge exchange, from us to other people and we are always learning too,” says Peter.

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AUTUMN TRADE DAY

New setting, new faces! The 2018 NGISA Awesome Autumn Trade Day shifted settings from the Urrbrae Campus to the renowned Morphettville racecourse. Sponsored by Van Schaik's BioGro and Ball Australia, the trade event was open to NGISA affiliates and friends, showcasing a variety of stalls and new faces, such as Studio 180. Greeted at the door by Dot Flint of Adelaide Plant Growers and Charlize Crampton (helping mum and dad Nadine & Steve) of Semaphore Pets and Garden, buyers were able to preview new and trending season items, as well as order and purchase from South Australian producers. Stalls displayed a variety of stock, from garden accessories, such as pots and tools, media, as well as plants from small herbs to indoor plants and even advanced trees. A coffee truck and gourmet breakfast was available to attendees, free of charge courtesy of Van Schaik's & Ball.

Mark Briggs of Briggs Nursery was delighted by the newfound setting, "Fantastic!". When asked on his motivation to return, he stated, "I come here because I want to meet people who do [buy stock]," to network in the local industry. Part of six past Trade Days, Briggs assures, "you will be seeing more of me!".

Scott Lewis of Lewis Horticulture, a long-time regular of the event, has witnessed Trade Day 'change a lot' over time, since first exhibiting decades ago. Lewis views the event as an "important industry event to get all growers and customers together," he continues, "without the support of suppliers and retailers, it wouldn't be as successful as it is." A fellow regular, Peter Jong from Jong's Nursery and NGISA board member, added it was also 'busier than normal', due to growing support in the community.

Winner of Best Greenlife Display, regular Poplar Grove brought some interactivity to their stall with a Wheel of Fortune inspired prize pool with rewards from saving on the next order, an 'insta-pic' with Hayley Whitehorn and the classic lucky dip! According to Whitehorn, the spinning wheel was a "joint idea with owner Jason [Scroop]," as, "Jason

really liked the idea of having more fun and bringing a bit of excitement to Trade Day". The business has been participating with Trade Day for over a decade and views the event as more 'networking than sales', as it pulls faraway customers, allowing them to view new stock and view the catalogue through the display.

Another lucky winner of the Awesome Autumn Trade Day raffle was Wendy Foot of Mitre 10 Mt Barker who won the extravagant prize, featuring products from all the stalls. 'I have never won anything in my life!' she revealed. The best Allied Display went to the Northcote Pottery, a stall showcasing large pots of many sizes, designs and colourways.

Overall, the Awesome Autumn Trade Day was a bustling event full of enthusiasm in support for the South Australian horticulture industry. Businesses were mingling with each other and interacting with customers face-to-face, while the lush artificial turf was the perfect accent to the stunning and colourful exhibits.

Ashleigh Roberts



Sue Prettejohn from Living Colour Nursery.



AUTUMN TRADE DAY



Poplar Grove.



The Morphettville racecourse Trade Day site.



Jeff Clarke - Craighburn Farm Nursery.



Lewis Nursery.



Charlize Crampton and Dot Flint.

NextGEN



The NextGen's last event was a social meeting at which 10 members enjoyed dinner and a night out at the Adelaide Festival Fringe.

Word has it that it was a fun night, including the fringe karaoke singing late in the evening!

The committee will be meeting again soon to plan activities in the coming months with two events likely following a member survey – a merchandising event and another production nursery tour.

Anyone interested in improving leadership skills and learning more about the industry is welcome to get in contact with NextGen and attend next meeting.

The Committee also has vacancies for two extra members so if you are interested in joining and helping out, or are already a member and keen to contribute, contact Peter Jong, email peter@jongsnursery.com

Horticulture industry hopes for State Government commitment

The Horticulture Coalition of South Australia has asked the new South Australian Government to pledge additional funds and resources to protect the future of the horticulture industry.

Prior to the election the Coalition released the 'Horticulture Blueprint' that outlines key initiatives for the upcoming state election to support South Australia's \$3.1 billion horticulture industry to enable it to grow in the future.

The 'Horticulture Blueprint' outlines key biosecurity priorities and includes initiatives regarding improving fruit fly prevention programs, enhanced resourcing within Biosecurity SA, and strengthened capacity in plant biosecurity surveillance and diagnostics.

It calls for capitalising on our biosecurity strengths to develop export markets through ongoing support for the Riverland Pest Free Area, broadening recognition in international markets of South Australia's Fruit Fly Free status in other production areas such as the Mount Lofty Ranges and the development of a one-stop accredited treatment facility for more efficient pathways to export markets.

Horticulture Coalition of South Australia, President,

Mrs. Susie Green, has called upon the South Australian Government to pledge additional resources and funds to protect the horticulture industry, especially considering the current fruit fly outbreaks in metropolitan Adelaide and the threats posed by the incursion of other exotic pests.

"Horticulture contributes \$3.1 billion to the South Australian economy (almost \$1 billion at the farm gate) and consists of 3,500 majority family-run businesses contributing 13,500 permanent and an additional 24,000 seasonal jobs and now is the time to do more for our industry.

"These outbreaks are not only a threat to our industry, they are also inconveniencing local residents, impacting retailers and putting home gardens at risk," Mrs. Green said.

NGISA is a member of the Coalition. Last year in a study conducted by the organisation, the study showed that the nursery and garden industry in South Australia contributed more than \$40 million to the state's economy.

For a full copy of the Horticulture Coalition of SA 'Horticulture Blueprint' send a request to, Horticulture Coalition of SA President, email: info@ngisa.com.au



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National model progressing



(l to r) Karen Brock, NGIA President, Gary Eyles first committee chair, Glenn Fenton, 2nd committee chair, Peter Jong who served on the 2nd committee, Damien Smith, consultant to the review.

The future of a national unity structure for the nursery and garden industry will rest with a vote of members later in the year after the potential financial model is developed.

A meeting of the NGIA Board, State Presidents, Executives and other representatives was conducted in Hobart after the NGIA Conference on 22 February. The aim of the meeting was to determine what is the final information and detail required to ensure the industry members have the best available information to make a decision. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for 15 May.

A panel session of the structure review was conducted at the conference. This session was "streamed live" over the internet so all members could have an opportunity to be fully informed and ask questions on the whys and wherefores of the review. A recording of the session can be found on the NGIA website at www.niga.com.au. The aim of the review of the NGI network structure has been to assess, identify, establish and implement an optimum structure for the nursery industry. The structure will provide

the governance, resources and frameworks to provide services, benefits and value to NGI members equally across the country, in the most cost effective and resource efficient manner.

The original requirement for the review was due to reduced funding available because of declining membership numbers (not in SA!) and changed funding arrangements with the transition of Horticulture Australia Limited to Horticulture Innovation Australia. A number of the NGI associations have not been profitable over recent years and using reserves to support their operations.

The review process is now getting to the stage where the members of the NGI network can make a decision on progressing to one united industry organisation. This will be done through a vote of members.

The final piece of the puzzle is to develop a financial model to demonstrate the new proposed entity will be profitable and to demonstrate the efficiencies of one organisation servicing members across the country.



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MEMBER PROFILE

Sandy Creek Plant Farm By Emma Heidenreich

Innovation in the veins

If you blink for too long, you miss Sandy Creek Plant Farm. Make a sharp right off the main road out of Gawler and you enter a place of innovation, engineered efficiency and warmth, proffered both from the 40+ temperatures on the day I arrived, but also from the owners – Marc and Monika Francis and their son Luke.

The family bought the vacant three acres of land back in 1982 with the express purpose of starting their own nursery. "I wanted to do my own thing," says Marc. "I had always been interested in plants, not just selling them but the whole process behind production."

Three decades on, Sandy Creek Plant Farm is a fully-fledged production nursery, growing hundreds of plant varieties, from climbers to eatables and lots in-between.

"We propagate 95% of our stock", says Monika. "We have a seed fridge that keeps all the seeds at exactly 13 degrees", she adds.

"We always have a combination of production happening, with future lines that we're building up to sell," says Luke. "Propagating our own stock means we can cut losses a lot quicker in the supply chain."

A recent example of which has taken place with the fruit fly outbreaks in Adelaide's western suburbs. The nursery has cut chilli plant production, with consumer demand expected to decrease sharply amid contamination fears.

"There is an element of risk with this" adds Marc, "growing your own stuff isn't easy and trying to stay on top with trends is like trying to steer the Titanic," Marc laughs. "But we really don't want to rely on other producers, we love having our independence. That way we can shield ourselves from external fluctuations in the industry."

At Sandy Creek Plant Farm, independence is everything. "Back in the day, this place was miles from anywhere and when you needed something, you couldn't just run off to a welder or a plumber, so we've become fiercely independent," says Marc.



The 'Suckatron' lifts several pots simultaneously.



The Francis family, Marc, Monika and Luke.

Much of the way business is done at the nursery stems from this belief. For the last several years, Luke has taken on the label design process.

"I enjoy the creativity of making our own labels," he says. "It gives us some autonomy and there's something really rewarding about creating something yourself and putting your mark on it."

Luke takes a simplistic approach to label design, "I wanted to go from the old paragraph format to a more simplistic layout, with clear plant care information. We make our instructions very specific, we find people really like clear directions with gardening."

In addition to label-making, the family take a resourceful approach to nursery logistics and maintenance. Examples include a vacuum cleaner-powered tool, aptly named 'The Suckatron', that makes transferring pots between boxes a much more efficient process.

Marc and Luke also designed what they call "E-trolleys" – deconstructed mobility scooters they have turned into powered nursery trollies, used for transferring heavy stock around the nursery. Perhaps the smallest and most ingenious addition to Sandy Creek Plant Farm is the Hort Disc, a small circular piece of plastic placed around a single-stem plant in potting phase, which helps to protect the soil surrounding the plant from Liverwort, moss and weeds, especially during the cooler months.

"Like any business, you try to become more efficient over time", says Luke. "It might seem like these are little picky things, but you multiply each movement by 1,000 a day and it all adds up in efficiency."

MEMBER PROFILE

Sandy Creek Plant Farm cont.

There are plenty of features that make Sandy Creek Plant Farm an emerging big gun, but despite this, the family are eager to keep a low-profile within the industry. 'We like to stick to our own guns and quietly achieve,' says Marc.

"Too many times we have seen other production nurseries

run themselves into the ground by expanding so quickly they cannot keep up, but our small business isn't like that, we want to invest in our workers, build up our infrastructure, build up the nursery and secure our future... onwards and upwards!" Marc laughs.



Sandy Creek strives to produce quality products.



The Hort disc to keep the plant free of weeds.

Smart water use in your garden

Here in South Australia, we're pretty good at using water efficiently, and this has largely come off the back of the Millennium Drought and the importance of conserving water during this period.

Although water security in the state has since greatly improved, being smart with your water use can still provide both cost and environmental benefits.

SA Water's Manager of Environmental Opportunities Greg Ingleton has been working with the Adelaide Airport over the past few years on a trial project to help achieve these goals on their site.

By watering the arid land that surrounds the airport's runway, therefore creating a green area with soil that holds moisture, on average, Greg's been able to cool the air by around three-degrees-celsius within the irrigation area.

Lowering the air temperature helps to reduce the energy used in the airport's cooling towers, resulting in lower operating costs.

A similar technique can be adopted in your own home.

When it's hot, we habitually switch on the air conditioner to cool our house. However, if you water your garden during the day – cooling the 'local' air temperature – this will have a comparable effect by

letting the cooler air into your home.

It's not about using more water, but being more strategic with your water use, to realise the wider benefits.

We stress though, the priority for everyone during hot weather is staying safe and reducing the risk of any health-related illnesses. Therefore we only recommend initiatives like this, if it works for you.

For more advice and tips on other ways you can be water efficient in and around your house, visit the SA Water website – www.sawater.com.au.



Adelaide Airport wetlands.



Plant Life Balance Report + 2020 Update

Partner of the



Grassroots feedback on the new Plant Life Balance

By Emma Heidenriech

In September, 2017, Hort Innovation released the new look Plant Life Balance consumer campaign. The campaign was linked to research at RMIT University in Melbourne which found that just one indoor plant (approximately 50cm in height) in one room (approximately 4x5ms in area), can increase interior air quality by up to 25 per cent.

Specifically targeted at gardening novices, it is to educate and attract prospective clientele to the benefits of owning indoor plants on their general wellbeing and health. It included the release of the innovative smartphone app 'How's Your Plant Life Balance?'.

The campaign has been met with mixed reviews from members. In my time interviewing some nurseries who participated, they have said the campaign must work at the grassroots, and consult with member nurseries to successfully continue driving sales of indoor plants and educating clientele.

The campaign was timely in catching the trend of indoor gardening, but it's enormous reach as a national campaign has made engagement with individual nurseries difficult.

Many members feel the campaign has the potential to draw younger clientele, something the horticulture industry has been aiming at for many years. Steve Neale of Garden Grove in suburban Adelaide said "this campaign, in particular its use of social media to drive sales, has attracted young people and grown their interest in plants, we've certainly seen more young people come in to buy indoor plants since the campaign began."

"Indoor plants are very much in vogue at the moment," said Laela Bland, owner of Crafers Garden Centre and Landscape Supplies, "but more consultation with nursery owners would've definitely benefited the campaign – without that direct consultation, you lose valuable knowledge."

"For example, the smartphone app needs to give more advice about growing conditions and suitability of certain plants to different areas in your home and garden," she said.

Leonie Ebert at Kallinyalla Garden Centre in Port Lincoln believes the campaign would be more effective if it had been launched with a travelling roadshow.

"With advice and expertise promoted in local schools as an event and in conjunction with local nurseries, especially in rural and regional parts of the state like ours," she said.

The campaign's promotional material received some accolades with Leonie Ebert saying that she enjoyed working with the promotional material sent to them through the campaign which had extra information to promote the health benefits of owning indoor plants.

"I think the campaign is a great initiative, we have seen indoor plant sales increase by 30% this year and I know some of that has been thanks to the campaign," said Steve Neale.

Similarly, Dianne Hall of Newman's Nursery said "our indoor plant sales have been up by 25% since December. Whether these increased sales can be clearly attributed to the campaign is difficult to determine."

Laela Bland said Instagram is a huge medium through which they conduct a lot of our marketing.

"I think the Plant Life Balance Campaign can be more effective by including pictures from nurseries' individual Instagram pages and social media sites, thus taking advantage of the network that already exists in the South Australian horticultural scene.

"I think there is potential for the campaign to benefit individual nurseries, it just needs to engage a lot more with members directly at the grassroots."

More promotion coming up

The Plant Life Balance campaign hopefully will get a big boost this spring if NGISA's promotional plans with Hort innovation come to fruition. It was announced at the national conference that Bunnings will be taking up the program, so it will be important for independent garden centres to remain two steps ahead of them!

More in the next issue of 'What's Growing On'.



KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

- Greening up your plants

Both professional growers and home gardeners want their plants to look lush and green, with a bright colour that indicates the plant's good health and potential for growth. Plants can be paler than is their normal shade of green for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Nutrient deficiencies: nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, iron, manganese, oxygen (from waterlogging)
- Toxicities: phosphorus, pesticides, over-fertilisation
- Other causes: wrong light, root rotting, pot bound, high temperature, naturally pale new shoots.

Successful diagnosis rests on the detailed recording of the progress of the symptoms, of the environmental conditions at the site and a record of actions taken prior to and during the development of the symptoms.

For example

- Manganese (Mn) deficiency: Interveinal yellowing in youngest leaves (mainly) but could be older leaves. Veins remain green but less sharply so than with Fe deficiency. Maybe water-soaked spots and dead areas in the leaves. Check that mix pH is not too high. Spray with a manganese chelate solution.

- Phosphorus (P) toxicity: May produce iron deficiency symptoms in young leaves, and/or death of tips progressing to death of whole leaves in the oldest leaves. Most likely in phosphorus-sensitive native plants.
- Plants that have been in their pots for too long may show paleness through the effect of an inability of the plant to produce new roots, and hence to take up enough nutrients. Check for root binding.

Be aware that the flush of new leaves on many plants can be paler/redder than the more mature leaves. Maturation soon greens them up without your intervention.

To read the full article about greening up and other articles, visit the Bio Gro website at:
www.biogro.com.au/knowledge-centre/

For more information contact Bio Gro on 1800 BIO GRO to speak with a grower services representative.

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SA Autumn Garden Festival on April 29

Coming up on Sunday April 29 is the SA Autumn Garden Festival, being held in the Clare Showgrounds, less than 2 hours' drive from Adelaide.

Several NGISA members are participating among the record 67 stand holders. Joining SA Water as major sponsors this year is NGISA Platinum sponsor, Van Schaik's BioGro. NGISA also supports this Festival for the work it does in promoting gardening in SA.

Tino Carnevale from ABC's Gardening Australia returns as a special guest presenter who will be joined by HMA president and local media gardening expert, Karen Montgomery.

The date has also been set for next Year's festival - it will be on Sunday April 6.

Heynes Garden Centre's refurbished shadehouses

Heynes Garden Centre at Norwood has just undertaken the refurbishment of two old growing shadehouses on their Beulah Park site (pictured).



Vale Lois Ugody

It is with sadness that we report on the recent passing of Lois Ugody, the wife of the late Frank Ugody, who was the first ever president of the Landscape Association of South Australia.

Both Lois and Frank, who died in 2005, were staunch supporters of the landscaping and nursery and garden industries in our state.

Our condolences to Lois' family, including daughter Katherine, son Michael and son-in-law Matthew.

Fruit Fly Update



There have now been four different fruit fly outbreaks declared in Adelaide this year. Three of them have been Queensland fruit fly - in West Hindmarsh, Woodville Gardens and Brooklyn Park - and one of Mediterranean fruit fly in Kilburn.

The usual suspension zones were declared of a 15km radius, which affected most of metropolitan Adelaide.

They have impacted upon the nursery industry meaning that any plants with fruit cannot be taken out of the suspension zones. This has affected mainly ornamental chillies and citrus.

National Biosecurity Award to John McDonald

Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) National Biosecurity Manager John McDonald has been awarded a 2018 Australian Biosecurity Award for his contribution to maintaining the nation's biosecurity integrity.

Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Lyn O'Connell, made the announcement at the ABARES Conference Dinner in Canberra in March.

Developed by NGIA, BioSecure HACCP has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery industry levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

It has become one of the nation's most successful on-farm biosecurity programs led by industry and is being formally recognised by state jurisdictions and adopted across Australian production nurseries.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) was detected in a warehouse in western Sydney in November and since then more were discovered in a shipping container in Perth, WA, in January. A strong community engagement and social media campaign in both cities to increase awareness of BMSB, resulting in over 160 suspect reports in Sydney alone.

BMSB is a significant threat to agriculture due to its wide host range and the damage it can do to vegetable crops and fruit and ornamental trees.

Sophie's new book

Popular Adelaide media personality Sophie Thomson has written a book entitled 'Sophie's Patch' about her garden and the concepts of sustainable gardening which she always preaches.

The book will be launched on March 19.

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