

# What's Growing On



Nursery & Garden Industry  
South Australia

AUTUMN|2021



2020 Awards of Excellence Presentation Dinner





Nursery & Garden Industry  
South Australia

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# President's Report



## On the cover

**An enjoyable evening was had by all as the NGISA Awards of Excellence for 2020 were presented at the Stamford Grand Hotel. Read all about it and see the photos within.**

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3** Garden Goss
- 4** Trade Day pictorial
- 6** Online sales
- 8** 2020 Awards of Excellence
- 16** A Day in the Life - Brunnings
- 18** Vale Jack Bowden

## NGISA acknowledges the support of our industry sponsors

### PLATINUM



### GOLD



### SILVER



Welcome to the Autumn edition of What's Growing On. Since the last edition there has been a lot of activity for NGISA and our members. I won't steal Dannielle's thunder on the activities she has organised as they will be in her Executive Officer's report. I will briefly mention how awesome it was to see 184 guests at our Awards of Excellence enjoying themselves and having a great time after a very challenging 12 months. This was followed by our first Garden Goss and with the success of this the Board has decided to not go ahead with the State Conference in June and instead put on more Garden Goss evenings with guest speakers focusing on pertinent topics.

Changes were made necessary in the office of NGISA with Neville leaving after 6 years and I thank him for his important contribution to NGISA which included the coordination of our articles in the SA Gardens and Outdoor Living magazine, along with putting together our What's Growing On industry magazine. Keri Nottage will be welcomed to the team in mid April as Administration Assistant to support Dannielle. Keri will continue working as Studio Manager for WAX Design, a Landscape Architecture company 2 days a week. Haidi Sutherland will take on the role of article co-ordinator for the SA Gardens and Outdoor Living magazine and has experience in writing articles along with the knowledge she has gained with her Indoor Plant workshops and working in the industry.

Trade Day was back after a years absence because of COVID19 in March and it would be fair to say numbers were down on exhibitors with Victorians not prepared to attend for various reasons. It was noted that buyers were also down and there will be a review to see what can be done to freshen up Trade Day which is an important event for the industry.

There are exciting times ahead for NGISA members with many new initiatives and events, so stay tuned and happy planting!

David Eaton  
NGISA President



Nursery & Garden Industry  
South Australia



# Garden Goss



The inaugural Garden Goss member event was held on Wednesday 3 March 2021 at the British Hotel in North Adelaide. Sponsored by Wholesale Plants & Products, Garden Goss is a series of events that brings members together to catch up socially and learn more on particular topics. The first one was all about Education & Employment in the industry and Victoria Pearce from Ironwood Institute was our presenter. Over 30 members attended, along with representatives from the Primary Industry Skills Council of SA and TAFESA.



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# TRADE DAY



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*President David Eaton on the microphone.*



*The Van Schaik's BioGro stand.*



*Balhannah Nurseries stand.*



*L-R Victoria Pearce - Ironwood Institute, Chris Physentzou - Adelaide Plant Growers, Dot Flint.*



# TRADE DAY cont.



*Easy Colour made the journey from Victoria.*



*Alastair McLean representing NextGen.*



*Happy shoppers.*



*Poplar Grove stand.*



*Floral Craft Centre.*



*David Eaton with Trade Day helpers - L-R Dot Flint, Keri Nottage, Dannielle Chapman.*



*Dan and Dianne Hall with Trevor Nottle representing HMA.*





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## Online sales?



# Garden centres moving that way

A simple survey conducted by NGISA about online selling resulted in 15 replies from SA garden centres and a clear indication that the majority are intending to sell online, even if they are not doing it yet.

Only two centres said their online sales were fully operational and another three have a limited presence, but another four said they had begun the process.

For the third that said they were not considering online sales, their main reason was that their customers prefer to come in and see what they are buying, and also thought their customers didn't want to buy online.

But for those selling online, the majority said that online was creating sales to new customers beyond their local areas, while three said they were attracting new customers from interstate.

For those online most said that sales made up to 10% of their sales, while one garden centre said it was between 10 and 15%. Average spend was not less than \$50, with most saying it was between \$50 and \$100m, while two centres said it was over \$100.

The range of products was evenly divided in terms of what is, or will be, offered. Selected greenlife instead of all greenlife was preferred with giftware, garden care products, gift vouchers and pots making up the balance of offerings.

Looking to the future, most felt that online sales would not make up more than 10% of their overall sales, but four were more overly confident, predicting between 10 and 20% of future sales would come from online customers.

When it comes to setting up online, the majority recommended using experts and almost all were integrating it into existing systems offered by Tower or Evergreen Connect and also integrating it with their existing websites. Of the four who identified how much they were spending all said between \$3,000 and \$8,000 was needed to set up online sales.

It seems that online sales will be a part of the offering of many garden centres in SA, particularly as a way to grow sales beyond existing customer bases. Watch this space!

## Autumn Magazine out now



In this issue gardening expert Kim Syrus, shares his vast knowledge with SALIFE Gardens & Outdoor Living readers from now on. You may recognise Kim's friendly face, on the front cover, from his regular television show Indoors Outdoors or one of his many other media and public speaking roles. Kim is both a qualified horticulturist and a respected plant expert. In this issue, Kim takes us through all the jobs that might need doing in the garden, as well as what to plant.

Pick up a copy now!



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## I CHOOSE SA





Nursery & Garden Industry  
South Australia

# Awards of Excellence

The NGISA Awards of Excellence dinner evening was once again a great celebration of the nursery and garden industry in South Australia.

Held on Friday February 19 at the Stamford Grand Hotel at Glenelg, the dinner's theme was 'Tropicana' and more than 180 people came along, many of them dressed colourfully to create a vibrant and fun atmosphere in the room. It was a record attendance for the event for over two decades and once again sponsored by Brunnings Garden Products.

Apart from the industry awards, the evening also provides an opportunity to recognise people who have made a significant contribution to the industry both in and out of the association.

Two special industry awards were made by NGISA for 2020.

The Doug Smart Award of Merit for someone who is not a member of NGISA but has made a major contribution to gardening went to rose 'guru' Kelvin Trimper, AM.

The NGISA Award of Honour for contribution to the industry was awarded to Mr Chris Physentzou, owner of Adelaide Plant Growers, a wholesale nursery south of Adelaide. Chris has served on the NGISA board for many years, several as treasurer and has been a longtime supporter of trade days.

No Life memberships were announced on the night. Life members, Malcolm Lewis, Dianne Hall, Geoffrey Fuller and Graham Brown were in attendance.



Kelvin Trimper AM, recipient of the Doug Smart Award of Merit, pictured with Nick Smart.



Chris Physentzou, recipient of the Award of Honour, pictured with David Eaton, President.



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Our dedicated judges, L-R Kim Syrus, Kelvin Trimper and Andrew Hutchison.

The Awards of Excellence presentations were the highlight of the evening and recognise the best in the industry and were announced back on February 19 at the Stamford Grand at Glenelg to an audience of over 180 industry peers.

The judges this year were gardening identities, Kim Syrus, Kelvin Trimper and former garden centre owner Andrew Hutchison who had the hard task of deciding upon the best of the best.

On behalf of all judges Kim Syrus said the level of quality and presentation across the board was outstanding, as well as commitment to customer service.

"Across the board all the finalists had great customer relationships and through the pressure of 2020, all had displayed enthusiasm, innovation and loyalty to their customers."

**The Best Garden Centre in SA Award** went to Barossa Nursery in Nuriootpa.

Described as 'the complete package of what a great garden centre should be', judges said Barossa Nursery was attuned to their customers and their merchandising of greenlife through to giftlines was exemplary.

"Apart from the fantastic quality and presentation of their greenlife stock, they have taken the range and presentation of giftlines to a new level."

The Best Boutique Garden Centre Award went to Semaphore Pets & Gardens.

"Once again they understand their customer base and have linked pets and plants very well to create a unique experience," the judges agreed, "with Audrey the alpaca and their macaw featuring strongly."

"They fill the shop to overflow without quality or presentation suffering and staff enthusiasm is infectious."

**The other major awards were for the production and allied areas of the industry.**

Native Plant Wholesalers based at Mount Gambier was awarded **Best Production Nursery Award**. Native Plant Wholesalers are one of the biggest growers of native plants in Australia.

**The Best Specialist Nursery in SA Award** went to Living Colour, based at Penfield in Adelaide's northern suburbs. Living Colour are the leading grower of seedlings and potted colour in the state.

**The Best Allied Trader Award - Commercial** was a win to pot supplier Garden City Plastics. Brunnings Garden Products won the other major award for Best Allied Trader - Consumer.

**Other awards announced on the night were:**

**Young Leader of the Year:** Jack Robins, Poplar Grove Wholesale Nursery

**Outstanding TAFE Horticulture Student of the Year:** Elly Potter

**Best New Product:** Van Schaik's BioGro Premium Potting Mix

**Best New Plant:** Plum A-Okay by Balhannah Nurseries

**Best Marketing:** 'FebReplant' - a community focused campaign, Heyne's Wholesale Nursery

**Outstanding Staff Member:** Mandy Bartholomew, Native Plant Wholesalers

**Best Supplier of Greenlife to the Landscaping Industry:** Heyne's Wholesale Nursery - SA Grown





Kelvin Trimper and Nick Smart.



Samuel Luke and Sharon Norman.



Mandy Bartholomew and Carrie Prettejohn.



Ashley Burns, Matt Van Schaik and Geoff Prettejohn.



Jack Robins and Alex Czura.



Jason Dawe and Graham Brown.



Sarah Anthony and Elly Potter.



Jason Dawe and Matt Van Schaik.





MC Ian Doyle, Dannielle Chapman and Mark Chapman.



Jason Dawe and Carrie Pettejohn.



Daniel Bartsch, Erica Bartsch and David Eaton.



Sarah Anthony and Jacki Bowden.



Carl Heyne and Amanda Grocock.



Brooke Seward and Daniel Bartsch.



Chris Physentzou and David Eaton.



Jason Scroop and Matt Van Schaik.



Graham Brown, Nadine and Steve Crampton.





MC Ian Doyle.



Rebecca Mumford.



Lorraine Poole and Renae Pyke.



The Heyne's Wholesale Nursery Team.



Jacki Bowden and Maria Sibley.



The Team from Wholesale Plants and Products.



Mark and Sam Telford.



The Brunnings Garden Products table.



# Thank You - by Neville Sloss



Now that the NGISA board has restructured the management and activities of the association and I am no longer with NGISA, I would like to reflect back on my time with the industry and with NGISA over nearly seven years since I came back to South Australia.

My involvement with the nursery and garden industry began here in the early 1980s when I was approached after being guest speaker at a Rotary Club meeting by the late Bill Slipper, a bedding plant grower and a member of the local Bedding Plants association. He said "I think our group could do with some good pr" and from there it began!

I worked with the local group for several years helping them with promotions, the most memorable being the launch of SA's Mighty Red tomato in conjunction with Jon Lamb, which became a national success.

For nearly 20 years I worked with the national Bedding Plants Australia group launching the Flower of the Year every year. During that time, then based in Sydney and later northern NSW, I worked with NGIA producing their industry newsletter, and on several industry projects with Horticulture Australia Ltd as it was known then. One was developing and managing the 'More Trees Please' campaign, part of the Plant Life Balance campaign.

Returning to SA in 2014, long-time industry friend Geoffrey Fuller convinced me to meet with the Exec. of the association then, Milton Vadoulis, David Kirk and Craig Norman, to discuss what could be done here in SA. Their aim was to take the local gardening magazine to 'the next level' and the result after several months of negotiating options was SA Gardens & Outdoor Living. Not only did it result in an excellent magazine for the promotion of gardening and the SA industry, it also included a substantial financial return to the association which continues to this day.

Coming on board as the Communications Manager I could also see there was a need for more industry communications and the 'What's Growing On' newsletter was born, along with an upgrading of the weekly Nursery Notes and a new monthly e-news called Clippings.

It has been an interesting and rewarding few years managing Trade Day and moving it to Morphettville, undertaking AGCAS audits at SA's leading gardening centres and doing the Awards and Dinners. The last couple of years were trying, with Grant Dalwood's stroke and illness then the COVID situation arising last year and still with us unfortunately.

I would like to wish NGISA members well for the future and take this opportunity of thanking all those members who have contributed along with way – those who I have 'talked into' writing for the gardens magazine and those who have shared their stories in What's Growing On. I leave the role satisfied that my contribution to the association has left it in a more solid position for the future. Contrary to rumours that I was retiring, I will still be about working with Garden Centres of SA, which I believe is one of the success stories of independent garden centres in Australia and can only getting stronger in the years ahead.

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## EO's Report



It has been a very busy and exciting start to the year for NGISA. Our 2020 Awards of Excellence were presented at the Stamford Grand Hotel to an almost sell out crowd. A great night was had by all as we celebrated excellence within the industry. It was wonderful to see everyone embrace the Tropicana theme and enjoy the added atmosphere along with the band.

We introduced and awarded the inaugural SALIFE Gardens & Outdoor Living Magazine Peoples Choice Award for the Best Garden Centre to Barossa Nursery. Run in conjunction with Solstice Media, the award was promoted online to the general public across all of their publications including SALIFE magazine, INDAILY and CityMag. Garden Centres were encouraged to promote the voting within their own outlets and their online profiles.

Autumn Trade Day was held at the end of March with 26 stallholders. Some Victorians were able to participate, but others were unable to take the risk of being away from their businesses incase they were required to quarantine on return.

The inaugural Garden Goss event was held at the British Hotel in March. It was a great success and we look forward to hosting the next session in May, with guest presenter Brooke Seward from Solstice Media. We are pleased that our contract with Solstice Media has been renewed for a further 3 +3 years and look forward to our continued work together to produce the SALIFE Gardens & Outdoor Living Magazine.

We have been successful in securing a grant to provide training in the industry through Matthew Wadewitz of LeadLearn. This grant enables our registered members to participate in a Certificate 4 or a Diploma of Leadership & Management course commencing next month.

We continue to work hard behind the scenes on behalf of our members to provide benefits and find opportunities to help improve their businesses.

**Dannielle Chapman**  
Executive Officer



# Smart water use leads the way for thriving communities



SA Water's smart irrigation initiative aims to work with the South Australian community to help maintain cool, green open spaces that build healthy communities.

Beginning in 2019, the initiative provides cost and water saving benefits through more effective and site-specific use of water, and has recently taken home a win in the Industrial and Primary Production category of the 2021 iTnews Benchmark Awards making it the only South Australian organisation to be commended.

The project uses real-time data from an integrated system of soil moisture probes, daily weather forecasts and smart water meters. The information is then provided to SA Water customers in the form of a weekly irrigation schedule based on live weather forecasts and calculated park specific soil conditions to optimise water efficiency for the best value for money.

The software avoids irrigation post or pre a rainfall event where irrigation isn't required, then re-calculates the soil moisture and adjusts the irrigation schedule accordingly for best growing conditions for green open space.

SA Water Innovation Specialist, Alex Czura said smart irrigation systems are currently installed in 25 council public spaces and playgrounds around Adelaide, and the councils who manage these areas use the data to determine the right amount of water to use, at the right time.

"Our initial research identified that many public green open spaces are being over-watered by around 20 per cent, by applying smart technology water savings can be applied to irrigate another park to thereby create more cooling, improve physical and mental wellbeing and create healthy thriving communities," Alex said.

"To demonstrate these cooling benefits, we have also installed more than 200 air temperature sensors across Adelaide from Gawler to Onkaparinga council in parks and playgrounds, with readings updated every 15 minutes and displayed live in an interactive map on our website.

"The sensors have so far demonstrated temperature differences of an average three to five degrees between irrigated and

non-irrigated spaces in the same suburb.

"Dry ground can be just as hot as bitumen and fake grass can be even hotter, so using water efficiently and in a cost-effective method can further reduce the creation of urban heat islands.

"Cooling occurs due to the evaporation of moisture from the soil and the transpiration of moist air from vegetation and is something that can be easily maintained with a relatively small amount of water.

"The same smart watering approach can be used in backyards too, which in turn reduces reliance on air-conditioning and associated energy use, providing cost savings and reducing environmental impact."

SA Water General Manager of Strategy, Engagement and Innovation Anna Jackson said the recent award win recognises the team's work in using innovative but simple digital tools to drive better outcomes for customers and the community.

"Through a combination of the smarts of our people and emerging smart technology, we are providing more efficient and affordable services now and into the future," Anna said.

"By supporting green infrastructure and the intelligent use of water, we can help to cool urban areas and reduce the impact of heatwaves and climate change.

"It also improves community liveability, simply by encouraging people to get outside more, even during summer months."

Councils involved are already starting to see cost and water saving benefits, and based on this success to date, SA Water is looking to expand the technology to more areas of the state, further promoting the smart and efficient use of water to contribute to healthy communities.





# 'A day in the life'

## Brunnings – dedicated to SA

When asked to describe a typical day at Brunnings, General Manager Simon Galpin laughingly says "mayhem!"

But it is very clear that it is very well organised mayhem as the business has grown to double its size in less than three years.

"Over this last COVID year some months have been up well over 100% but we have now settled into a 'new normal' which sees demand at least 20% up on previous times," says Simon.

Sales manager Carrie Prettejohn adds that business has now steadied across the year with new ranges filling the traditionally quieter periods such as summer and winter.

"For example a broader range of pest control and irrigation equipment now keeps us busy for the summer months."

Back to a day in the life of Brunnings and they both say every day is busy, busy. It begins after 6am when the warehouse begins to open and then the office staff arrive a little later. Over 20 people are employed across the business with five dedicated to the sales team, five in the office and the rest in receiving and dispatch. Plus there is owner David Kirk there most days to steer the ship.

A round of strong coffees helps prepare them for the day ahead, and no two days are the same. Training and innovation are important to Brunnings and on the training front, the company has been employing a mentor for over a decade to help staff members develop in their workplace and



*Sales Team - L-R Kiri Burnsden (North East Territory Manager), Carrie Prettejohn (State Sales Manager), Simon Galpin (General Manager), Sam Kirk (North West Territory Manager), Craig Schoof (Southern Territory Manager) and Carly Mattner (Hills and Inner City Territory Manager)*

also with any aspect of their personal life.

"We have a great team of dedicated and loyal staff, many of them having been with the company for more than 10 years," says Simon.

Brunnings Garden Products is a national brand, but each state business is owned independently.

"We have grown to represent a broad range of products and brands here and I am pleased that as of July 1 we will be taking on the distribution of the Seasol range of products to the independent sector here in SA," says David.

Their current brands include Brunnings, Gardman, Big Cheese, Times Up, The Buzz, Multicrop, Fothergills, David Gray, Darlac, Martin's, and the newly created Gardman Home and Gifts.

The Brunnings' owners purchased Gardman a few years ago and set up Gardman Australia which is now 100% Australian owned & operated with a team sourcing and managing QC in our own China office.

Coming back to innovation, David Kirk points out that their ranges are constantly evolving and that's because of their investments in packaging and sourcing new products.

"We are all about building the business partnerships we have with all of our customers. It is in everyone's interest to do this and this is paramount to our sales team.

"South Australia has the strongest base of independent garden centres in Australia and we are committed to working with them to grow their businesses."

Brunnings are obviously looking to the future with optimism



*Standing L-R Margaret, Liz, Candice and Linda. Sitting - Karen.*



## 'A day in the life'

### Brunnings – dedicated to SA

when you see the investment currently underway at their Dudley Park site. A huge new warehouse will almost triple the amount of stock they have 'on the ground' (actually the pallets will be stacked six high in the new 12m tall warehouse!), allowing for 1800 pallets to be stored.

David says it will greatly improve their logistics of stock in and out. "After the pressures of COVID last year the new warehousing will greatly improve our service to all of our customers."

Apart from all the backroom office work that goes on through the day, containers and semis are coming and going most days and by 5pm after a long day the warehouse team call it a day. Simon says though, quite often the last person to leave the office can be there until 7pm.

"We have mainly good days but even on the odd bad day we try and keep smiling and importantly keep our focus on our customers."



David in the warehouse.



The Management Team.



Nick.



Sesto.

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A large advertisement for Calibrachoa Goodnight Kiss flowers. It features a woman blowing a kiss, a heart-shaped lollipop, and a hanging basket of purple flowers. The background is pink and white with a star pattern.



# Vale Jack Bowden. 1930 - 2021

## One of SA's most well-known nurserymen



Jack Bowden, after first starting his career as a boot repairer, began his career as a nurseryman in 1966 when he opened 'Bowden's Garden Centre' on the front garden of his home on North East Road at Modbury.

A cyclone fence was put up and he had 400 plants in 4" pots ready for sale. Jack had the drive and determination along with the gift of the gab as he worked hard side by side with his wife Betty and built the business.

Jack worked with many of the founding nurserymen of South Australia – Lorie Steadman, Parry Vadoulis, Don Hardy, Don O'Brien, David Thomson, Maurie James and Bruce Croser to name a few, most of whom would be unknown among the younger generations. His first employee was Martin Cox a young teenage lad, who has had a long career in the industry and these days works at Semaphore Pets & Gardens.

Jack eventually sold the Nursery on North East Rd and moved to a six hectare property on Range Road South at Houghton in the Adelaide Hills, to establish a wholesale

nursery growing established trees and glasshouse stock.

Trips were made to Melbourne to purchase stock, from tree ferns from Lavers Hill to azaleas from Dandenong Ranges filling the truck and trailer to the roof. There is many a story that can be told about those trips, being overloaded and at a top speed of 70km/hour all the way home. A blow out would mean having to unload the truck or trailer so he could jack it up to change the tyre!

The Range Road South property was acquired by the government in the late 70s so Jack was forced to consider his options. The wholesale business sold to SA Wholesale Nurseries with Malcolm Norman owner at the time and Jack decided to open a retail garden centre again, this time on Lower North

East Road at Dernancourt. Again the "Bowden's Garden Centre" sign was placed out the front and Jack and Betty worked hard to establish another good business, later sold to a hardware chain.

Jack then went into what he called semi-retirement 'working for someone else'. At the charity, Goodwill, at Cavan he started another garden centre to give employment to special needs staff. He was just the person, starting with one staff member that soon grew to have 12 staff. After five years Jack took a break.

Jack went on to be propagator for SA Wholesale Nursery whose owners were Grant Dalwood & Grant Nobblett. With Betty still by Jack's side working together, Jack often said he'd like a dollar for every Golden Diosma he had propagated, he had the golden touch.

Through Jack's long career he worked hard, being self-taught in so many ventures he took on. He saw a lot of changes to the industry and he always maintained a love of plants and propagation. Jack still propagated anything he could till he was in his 80's when Betty finally said "enough".

Jack and Betty worked side by side, seven days a week for many years while raising a family of six children. One, Jacki, is well known to many in the industry through her role at Plant Access.

Jack is survived by wife Betty, children. Kerry, Wendy, Craig, Robyn and Jacki, and a host of grandkids. (Son Shane passed away last year.)



*The first Bowden Garden Centre at Modbury 1966.*



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