



Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia

Case Study

For immediate release

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Plant varieties to stand the test of time

Overview

Providing high quality plants and promoting the benefits of green space, so customers continue buying product, is something every nursery should be doing to help expand their own sales, and the industry generally.

That's the view of international plant introducer and marketer Anthony Tesselaar, who says everyone – from breeder to consumer – needs to be happy with the plants that are introduced into the marketplace.

Anthony Tesselaar Plants was founded 25 years ago and now operates in more than 15 countries, including two permanent offices overseas, and a head office at Silvan, east of Melbourne.

The business specialises in plant project management, which involves sourcing and marketing 'distinctively different' plants to domestic and international markets.



Image 1: Anthony Tesselaar

It starts with high-quality plants

Mr Tesselaar says that with more plants on the market than ever, ensuring plants selected by the business stand the test of time is vital, which is why new varieties are subject to lengthy trials.

"While a significant amount of time goes into plant breeding, only one in 10,000 new seedlings may actually make its way into the hands of nurseries, landscapers and home gardeners," Mr Tesselaar said.

"Plant breeding is an extensive process, which involves selecting particular plants and cross-pollinating them until a desired set of traits is achieved – a process that can take up to 25 years.

"When a plant breeder approaches us to assess their new creation, our first question is always: is it a one or two year wonder or will it stand the test of time? Put simply, just because a plant is new, doesn't necessarily mean it's good and should be introduced into the market."



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Mr Tesselaar and his team work closely with top quality plant breeders from Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, to shortlist, develop and introduce new plant varieties that might one day be commercialised.

His business has introduced some of Australia's best known varieties, such as the Flower Carpet rose, which has sold over 80 million world-wide, and the Daphne Perfume Princess, which won the Nursery & Garden Industry Australia's (NGIA) 2016 Plant of the Year Award.

When assessing the potential of a new breed, the company assesses six key characteristics: colour, form, long term appeal, eco-friendliness; disease fighting traits; and being easy to maintain.



Image 2: Anthony and Phillip Townshend in Holland

“Once we make a decision to invest in trials – that’s when the real work begins. A further three to six years of research involves testing the plants across a diverse range of climatic zones, including regular, everyday conditions to ensure they are fit for purpose and easy to maintain for the home gardener.

“Once we’re satisfied that a plant is worthy of a position in the marketplace, we start developing the positioning strategy for our licensed grower network, who are responsible for introducing it into the broader marketplace.

“When we first started this business in 1992, around 10 per cent of plants successfully passed the trial and test phase. Today, that figure is closer to 50 per cent.

“This comes down to better selections that come with a greater understanding of what the supply chain needs, particularly the consumer,” he said.

Intellectual Property (IP): “If you play the game, know the rules”

Having a new variety that is distinct, uniform and stable provides a breeder with the ability to obtain to intellectual property (IP), a term which covers legal protection and ownership of property, such as plant breeder’s rights (PBR), patents, trademarks, copyright, trade secrets and designs.

Businesses in the Australian nursery industry have an extensive range and number of plant varieties protected by IP rights both domestically and internationally.



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Over the years, the industry has invested in various research projects on IP. Understanding the difference between various forms of IP can benefit growers, and even add a competitive advantage.



Image 3: Reinhard Noack and Anthony in Germany discussing Flower Carpet

“Our products are protected under trademarks, copyright and of course, PBR. It’s recognition for the work that goes into breeding, developing and taking a plant to market - it’s the return on investment,” Mr Tesselaar said.

“Ultimately though, a new plant must have characteristics that set it apart from other varieties already on the market – it must be distinctively different.”

Hard work pays off

Mr Tesselaar says that together these elements around IP help to raise the profile of, and build support for, the overall nursery industry: an industry he believes that brings new life into our homes and our communities.

“If we’re all out there collectively, promoting the benefits of green space, that’s going to help every other product line, grower and retailer in the marketplace,” Mr Tesselaar said.

“When a consumer walks away with a plant that ticks all the boxes, they usually go out and expand their garden purchases into all other varieties and types. And to me, that’s only going to be a good thing for the future of our industry.”

To learn more about Intellectual Property – including Plant Breeder’s Rights – go to the IP Australia website www.ipaustralia.gov.au, which has extensive information and support tools including a searchable database of currently registered PBR varieties.

Peter Vaughan, the CEO of NGIA, sits on the PBR Consultative Committee to ensure the nursery industry is represented to deal with all issues, matters and policy related to PBR.

****ENDS****

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