



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

## Case Study

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# Move ‘downunder’ pays dividends for SA production nursery

The untapped potential of Australia’s nursery industry, discovered during a trip to see family in 2008, prompted Peter Jong and his father Nico to close their nursery in the Netherlands and shift their operation ‘downunder’.

The family put their horticultural knowledge and experience to work, building the award-winning Jong’s Nursery over a 1.4 hectare site at Willunga, 42km south of Adelaide in South Australia.

Production commenced with testing a diverse range of plants, paired with careful investment in infrastructure, to give the nursery the flexibility to evolve as the business direction took shape.

Today the nursery specialises in advanced potted colour (120mm pot), orchids and potted bulbs, supplying high-end and large retailers, independent garden centres and wholesalers nationwide.

### Starting a nursery in Australia



Director, Peter, said their limited knowledge of the Australian nursery industry provided a unique perspective on the type of business they wanted to establish and, more specifically, the type of products they wanted to sell into the domestic market.

“Our business direction at Jong’s was heavily influenced by our education and experience of horticulture in Europe,” he said.

“Australia was an ideal location for us to establish a family owned and operated nursery and to continue to pursue our passion for the horticulture sector.

“At Jong’s we make a concerted effort to focus on producing quality and specialised crop lines to meet the needs of our customers while differentiating our offerings from other businesses within the region.

“We see other nurseries as colleagues, not competitors, and can do so by focusing on niche markets. For instance, we’re now South Australia’s largest producer of orchids and that’s something we’re very proud of.”



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### Water recapturing and recycling

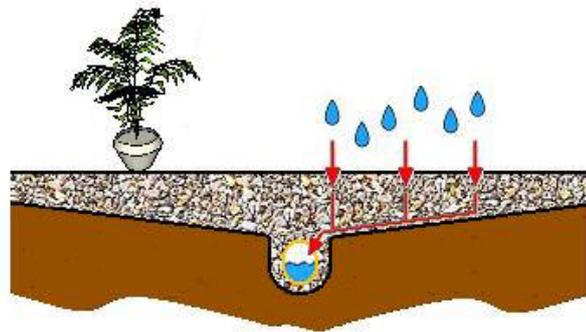
As an advocate for engaging in industry best management practices, Peter said minimising the business's environmental footprint underpinned a philosophy of holistic sustainability.

“Our unique approach to water management sets us apart from other systems currently on the market,” he said.

“In the Netherlands, the industry has a lot of issues with fertiliser run-off in the groundwater, so our goal is to operate as an environmentally friendly company and protect the native vegetation we have around us.

“We capture all water not used by plants, which can be as high as 80 per cent, meaning that there is zero nutrient output into the environment.

“More specifically, each bay in the nursery is graded so water drains into the centre, with seven centimetres of laser leveled gravel, which acts as a filter.



“The gravel is covered by a protective mat and ground cloth and the bays lead to a centre drain that is then pumped into a storage tank.

“From here, we tell the computer how much water to use based on the electrical conductivity (EC) level and the water is disinfected to reduce disease risk.”

### Best practice in the nursery

As vital as good infrastructure is, without a review process and feedback mechanism it is difficult to know how a business is operating relative to industry standard and what opportunities exist for growth.



For Jong's Nursery, gaining Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) accreditation in 2011 was an effective way to regulate internal processes to ensure the business is striving across all aspects of production.

“NIASA accreditation was an attractive option for us, so as to help identify areas within the nursery that could be improved,” Peter said.



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“The best practice programs like NIASA act like a checklist and keep us on our toes. While we were already doing most things in the manual before, it does give you that added security about what to look for, which you can miss when you’re so close to something.

“Receiving feedback from the annual independent audit as part of the NIASA accreditation is our way to keep on track and we value this feedback.

“After all, if you’re not moving forwards, then you’re going backwards,” Peter said.

In 2015, the nursery won Nursery & Garden Industry Australia’s award for Australia’s Best Small Production Nursery. The awards recognise nurseries excelling in business performance, products and services, and leadership within the industry.

To learn more, see the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ausngi>



**NIASA has been developed by Nursery & Garden Industry Australia in partnership with Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. For information on how to get involved, go to <http://nurseryproductionfms.com.au> or contact NGIA on 02 8861 5100 or [info@ngia.com.au](mailto:info@ngia.com.au)**

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