



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

## Grower case study

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For immediate release

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### Quality staff key to future growth at The Green Gallery

Quality staff is the backbone of business and the key to future expansion for first generation grower Jeremy Critchley who runs The Green Gallery, a wholesale nursery in Dural, New South Wales.



The business, which specialises in premium potted plants, has grown from a bench in Jeremy's backyard in Concord West fourteen years ago, to one that now employs around 20 staff.

It supplies plants to leading independent garden centres, landscapers and councils, with works displayed across some of Sydney's best-known landmarks such as Hyde Park, Martin Place and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Jeremy said that key staff have been instrumental to this long-term growth, although in recent years it's been increasingly difficult to find the right people – a common trend across horticulture.

"The Green Gallery is a smaller business that operates within a niche market. We grow more than 1500 different lines, so we have to rely heavily on manual labour, especially at busy times of the year," Jeremy said.

"Automation isn't as applicable to us, as it is in larger nurseries and while some tasks can be repetitive, it's also a specialist field. There's a lot of physical work, but it also requires a lot of thinking in order to produce a quality product for our customers.

"We grow a short cycle crop with most plants produced and sold within six to eight weeks. Almost 70 per cent of our business happens between August and December, so we tend to attract a lot of seasonal staff.

"I'd like to have access to a more sustainable workforce, as longer term staff can deliver up to three times more than newer staff. Anything that we can do to promote a career in the nursery industry, will make our future stronger."

Having completed a degree in Horticultural Science at the University of Sydney, Jeremy has worked in America with some of the best plant breeders and growers in the world. He believes that education and training is vital to workforce sustainability.

"Who we are going to employ in the future and where our next generation of growers and managers will come from are some of the concerns I share with my peers. My feeling is



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that there aren't enough people coming through the system and we need to change that," he said.



"One of the best things we can do is to treat people how we want to be treated. The business has a relatively flat structure, where everyone works closely together. I like to put a lot of science into what we do, and explain to staff not just how, but why, we do things in a certain way."

Jeremy said growers have a responsibility to share the benefits of how plants can enhance our lives, our communities and our environment, in order to attract more people to the industry.

He has welcomed a new project titled a 'Review of nursery industry career pathways' funded by Hort Innovation using nursery industry levies and funds from the Australian Government.

This project is being led by RM Consulting Group (RMCG) and aims to build a roadmap that outlines effective career pathway development plans for those working, or looking to work, across various levels in the nursery industry.

"I recently completed the project's survey, which was a good opportunity to provide the right people with real life examples of the challenges we face at the business level," he said.

"In reality, I could grow my business with more key staff. We've been fortunate enough to jump on greening trends such as indoor plants and green walls, but we need the right people to fully capture this opportunity.

"I don't believe people outside the industry fully appreciate the benefits of a career in horticulture. Anything we can do to promote the joys and benefits of nursery production is a great thing."

Industry is strongly encouraged to complete the online workforce survey, which will close on Friday 30 November 2018. To participate, visit <https://yourlevyatwork.com.au/survey-have-your-say-on-nursery-and-garden-industry-employment/>.

Over the next few months, the team from RMCG will collate the findings and survey responses to inform the development of an overarching strategy and implementation plan, due for release in the first half of 2019.

The overarching success of the project will be measured through the industry being recognised as a leading career option in production horticulture, with effective education and training opportunities, and valued as an employer of choice.

**Hort  
Innovation**  
Strategic levy investment

**NURSERY  
FUND**

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)



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