



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

# Feature

---

For immediate release

30 May 2017

## Invest in nursery expertise for long term benefits

Quality trees are the cornerstone of any orchard.

Getting a newly established block off to the best start can make the difference between strong, thriving, productive trees, and ones that just never really grow quality fruit or nuts.

The nursery industry is an important partner for growers, providing the expertise in propagation and rootstocks that can save time and, over the long term, money.

Mark Engall has been in the fruit tree business since he was 21, taking over the business with his mother when his father passed away.

“The type of rootstock has a definite impact on factors like the vigour of the tree and the quality of the fruit. Different rootstock will also perform better or worse depending on climatic conditions and soil types. So it’s important to get it right,” Mr Engall said.

“With citrus, for example, some rootstock will produce a quick growing tree that’s good on sandy soil, but the rind will be thicker and there’s less juice. Different stock will have slower growth but more juice.

“Some orchardists go down the DIY route to save money, but it’s false economy because it’s a time intensive process that takes them away from their core business to end up with a tree half the size of what a specialist can provide in the same timeframe.

“Buying trees off a reputable, accredited nursery will guarantee value for money. You’ll have a quality plant, grown in ideal conditions, on rootstock chosen by an expert in what’s compatible with that variety and local conditions.”

Gary Eyles, who’s been propagating citrus rootstock for 50 years, has invested heavily in greenhouses to get more control and speed up his production.

“If you’re planting new stock from cuttings out of an existing orchard – whether it’s your own or from down the road – there are several risks,” according to Mr Eyles.

“Every generation away from the source genetics has more chance of mutation, and without testing there’s also the possibility of transferring a disease through the propagation.



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

## Feature

---

“If the new stock doesn’t have the right heritigate or has a virus, it could look reasonable but have slow growth, less than ideal fruit set, and generally be less viable.

“Propagation nurseries, on the other hand, have strict processes in place to ensure they have healthy propagation material that’s true to type, grown in quality media best suited to the rootstock in question, that’s more likely to thrive in an orchard.”

The Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia (NIASA) is a Best Management Practice (BMP) program for production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets.

To gain and maintain accreditation, nurseries undergo an independent audit each year to ensure they are following guidelines in areas such as crop hygiene, crop management, water management and general site management.

Mr Eyles says sourcing material from a NIASA accredited supplier adds another level of protection for orchardists.

“It’s a best management practice system that takes in every step of production in the nursery, minimising biosecurity risks and ensuring quality is the top priority. We use accredited suppliers as well, so growing media is also the best we can get.”

NIASA was developed by Nursery & Garden Industry Australia in partnership with Horticulture Innovation Australia, using the nursery R&D levy and funds from the Australian Government.

### **BREAKOUT: The propagation process**

At Engall’s Nursery, citrus rootstock is grown from seed, with 75 seeds planted in each pot during September. Seeds are sourced from Auscitrus in Mildura, from trees tested every year and guaranteed virus free.

After a year, the seedlings are around 50cm high and bare rooted and graded, before the best are planted in individual bags.

After another six months, the plants are suitable for budding, and propagation materials are bought from Auscitrus that are guaranteed true to type and disease free.

When the seedlings are two years old, if the bud has been successful the tape is removed and the top of the rootstock is lopped off, forcing the young bud to shoot away.

They’re ready to sell another six to nine months later.

The process is similar at Eyles Citrus, but the greenhouses allow commercial grade trees to be ready in 18 months to two years.



Nursery & Garden Industry  
Australia

# Feature

---

## **BREAKOUT: Engall's Nursery**

Engall's Nursery has been operating since 1946, specialising in the growing of fruit trees. Located at Dural, north-west of Sydney, the business has eight full-time staff and produces some 50,000 trees a year. The majority of trees are sold to larger nurseries who collate orders for small numbers of different varieties of trees to supply to developers and landscapers, or directly to hobby farmers who want anything from two to 200 trees.

## **BREAKOUT: Eyles Citrus**

Close to 100 years in operation, Eyles Citrus is now located at Kenthurst, on the outskirts of Sydney. With 20 staff, it produces several hundred thousand plants a year, including both traditional citrus varieties and finger limes. Most of the production is done in greenhouses, which provides greater control over growing conditions and means a quicker production cycle.

\*\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*\*

For further information, please contact Sophie Keatinge, Cox Inall Communications, on 0430 938 515 or [sophie.keatinge@coxinall.com.au](mailto:sophie.keatinge@coxinall.com.au)

*This communication was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia using nursery industry levies and funds from the Australian Government.*