

# Your Levy At Work



Greenlife Industry Australia

June 2023

## Peace of mind and a genuine ROI: How NIASA supports WA's Frenchams Nursery

**Installing a colossal 6,000 plants into the new Chevron Tower in Perth's Elizabeth Quay to create lush spaces throughout its 29 levels is among the key projects delivered by indoor plant hire specialists, Frenchams.**

Installing a colossal 6,000 plants into the new Chevron Tower in Perth's Elizabeth Quay to create lush spaces throughout its 29 levels is among the key projects delivered by indoor plant hire specialists, Frenchams. Frenchams supply, maintain and if necessary, replace indoor plants in a broad range of offices and public buildings across Perth.

Delivering quality is a core focus of the business, so when Frenchams decided to establish their own nursery in Western Australia, securing Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) certification was a vital part of the process that yielded benefits from day one.

Frenchams Wholesale Nursery officially opened its doors in 2022 in the outer northern Perth suburb of Mariginiup and is now home to tens of thousands of indoor plants and outdoor species

### High standards for best practice management

Beau Grose, Frenchams Wholesale Nursery Manager, said going through the NIASA accreditation process with the support of GIA Extension Officer, Steve Blyth, has been instrumental in helping the nursery set high standards for best practice management for pests and diseases from the outset.

"Frenchams operates Australia-wide, but it was originally started in Melbourne. Our eventual aim is to ship plants back to Melbourne for indoor plant hire," Beau said.

"Where we are located in Perth is a declared green snail zone. We decided to go through NIASA and BioSecure HACCP accreditation to be able to ship plants to Melbourne.



Beau Grose, Frenchams Nursery

"While that was our initial motivation for going through the accreditation process, Steve highlighted all of the other benefits once we started.

"We soon realised that, while our end goal was to be able to ship plants to Melbourne, there were benefits for the nursery just by doing that process as well, and we embraced it from day one.

"We have implemented site surveillance and crop monitoring in accordance with NIASA and BioSecure HACCP guidelines and we see enormous value in that because you ultimately end up with a better product.

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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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“It makes life easier because we have procedures in place everyone follows that revolve around crop monitoring, and pest and disease management.

“For example, we have strict cleaning procedures in the potting sheds and production areas, and ensure workspaces are sanitised between potting up batches of different species. All of our potting media is stored on a concrete pad.

“We have a quarantine receivals area where all stock comes in, and it doesn’t leave that area until we inspect it to ensure it’s disease-free before we pot on to our production area.

“Steve also guided us toward implementing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan focussing on biological control of pests, so instead of relying on chemicals, we use a lot of beneficial insects.

“We constantly monitor crops and have sticky traps to monitor populations of pest species, so we know when we have to treat the problem.

“It’s all about ensuring we have a very clean and secure operation.

“Having the support of GIA and Steve has been extremely helpful. He has obviously guided the process and stopped us going off on tangents. We have recently attained NIASA, and now we’re working through BioSecure HACCP.”

## Supplying a growing demand

Beau said a desire to have greater control over their supply chain, reduce their carbon footprint, and expand their range of services to accommodate growing demand, were the catalysts for establishing the nursery.

“Our core business is indoor plant hire and because we use a lot of the same species over and over again, continuity of supply is critical. We’re our biggest customer,” Beau said.

“We found the local market was very hit and miss, so we were getting all of our plants from Queensland. When

COVID-19 hit, we had supply chain issues – freight costs went through the roof, and parts of the rail network linking the eastern states with Western Australia were washed out for three months; it just became a nightmare.

“When the opportunity to lease a property came up, the business owner, Matthew Gerraty, decided we would start our own nursery.

“It was an old tree nursery with roots in the ground, so we had to clear the site before we could do anything.

“Other than the fact there was a bore and some main lines under the ground, everything else was built from scratch.

“We’re on five acres, and quite a large proportion is under the cover of a tunnel house and shade house for the indoor species, which include Philodendron, Aglaonema, Ficus elastica, palms, Strelitzia, Syngoniums and ivy.

“We had some room outside and thought we’d utilise that space and grow a range of outdoor landscape lines and that’s worked out quite well. We supply to retail nurseries and commercial landscapers, often in large volumes.

“We stock a lot of popular landscape lines including native groundcovers and natives generally. In Western Australia, people have really gone back to waterwise plants, such as Westringias, Grevilleas, kangaroo paws, Hibbertia scandens, and Eremophila just to name a few.”

## Plants important to appealing workspaces

With many workplaces recognising the health and ecological benefits of an office filled with plant life, as well as the aesthetic appeal, Beau said the outlook for the business is positive.

“When people started returning to workplaces after COVID-19, it prompted employers to consider workspaces, and plants are an important part of that,” Beau said.

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“Developers of many new buildings are also now considering their NABERS rating. NABERS, which stands for the National Australian Built Environment Rating System, provides sustainability measurement, and plant density per square metre of floor space is part of that process.”

In terms of industry challenges, Beau said water security and pest and disease threats were key, ongoing issues, while the trend towards smaller residential block sizes was influencing outdoor plant choices.

“Western Australia is a dry climate and drying. A lot of our water comes from groundwater, from an aquifer called Gnangara Mound,” Beau said.

“When the WA Government decided to impose a 10% cut to water licence allocations to users of the aquifer, GIA supported NGIWA (Nursery Garden Industry Australia WA) who helped to convince the government to exempt production nurseries, based on NIASA’s and EcoHort water management and efficiency guidelines.

“If it wasn’t for GIA and the NIASA, EcoHort programs, we would have faced water cuts. I don’t think it’s a permanent exemption, but if nurseries can demonstrate best practice when it comes to water usage, it’s a huge help.

“There’s always the never-ending threat that some new pest or disease we don’t have could come in. When you’re an importing country like Australia, that’s a constant threat. Again, using NIASA and the BioSecure HACCP guidelines to monitor for pests and diseases is vital.”

For more information about NIASA, visit <https://nurseryproductionfms.com.au/>.

**ENDS**

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