

Your Levy At Work



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Alpine Nurseries leading the way in tree stock

Alpine Nurseries commitment of “creating happiness through greenlife” focuses on producing high-quality tree stock while ensuring that each plant not only enhances the beauty of its surroundings but also meets high standards for long-term growth and success.

Dan Ewings, General Manager of Alpine Nurseries, said that through supporting the development of beautiful and sustainable green spaces, Alpine Nurseries creates environments where people can not only enjoy greenery but also make lasting memories.

“Maintaining the Landscape Tree Stock Specification is central to our ethos of 'quality matters',” Mr Ewings said.

“For buyers overseeing investments in green infrastructure – such as government bodies, landscape professionals, and developers – ensuring trees have long and successful lives once they leave the nursery is paramount. This guarantees the sustainability and aesthetic value of the landscapes they enhance.

“Meeting the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) Landscape Tree Stock Specification (LTSS) for above and below ground plant parts helps production nurseries maintain competitiveness and helps to ensure that trees will thrive long term, benefiting the environment and returning value on the buyer’s investment.”

As Mr Ewings explains, to meet these elements within the specification, Alpine Nurseries implements a range of best management practices.

“Above ground, we focus on height, calliper, formative pruning, stem and branch structure, crown distribution and trunk position. Below ground, we address root diameter and depth, root crown height, rootstock suckering, root ball occupancy, root direction, root division and tree stock balance,” he said.

“These elements within the specification are crucial for stability, nutrient absorption and overall plant health.

“Low-quality nursery stock can result in trees failing or developing issues such as poor root structure, making them unstable and more susceptible to disease and environmental stress.

“The cost of replacing trees, especially in urban environments with surrounding infrastructure, can be very high. Ensuring access to optimal tree stock from the start helps mitigate these expenses and promotes long-term savings.”

Alpine Nurseries employs around 100 staff across three sites: two in Sydney (covering 30 and 10 acres, respectively), and a larger 100-acre site in Alstonville near Byron Bay, with approximately 80 acres developed as a production nursery. They serve a diverse customer base, including councils, retailers, commercial developers and the traditional residential landscape market.

The Landscape Tree Stock Specification

The NIASA LTSS is designed for production nurseries supplying tree crops into the landscape, wholesale, and retail supply chains.

The specification provides instructions, procedures, and an assessment checklist for independent auditing. Production nurseries like Alpine use these tools when producing tree stock for the landscape sector.

Following all of the elements within the LTSS ensures that clients receive tree stock grown to best practice standards, ensuring plants success and longevity, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of landscapes and providing significant value to stakeholders.

The LTSS includes:

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- **General quality:** true to type and tree stock health.
- **Above ground aspects:** height, trunk diameter, formative pruning, stem and branch structure, crown distribution, compatibility of graft unions, trunk position, and being self supporting.
- **Below ground aspects:** rootball diameter and depth, height of root crown, rootstock suckering, rootball occupancy, root direction, and root division.
- **Record keeping:** appropriate records completed and kept for tree-stock assessment.

The value of LTSS certification

Best management practices go hand in hand with accreditation, certification and compliance. These elements don't stop at ensuring tree stock quality and longevity, they have a flow on effect that ultimately improves a nursery's bottom line.

"Achieving these standards enhances marketability and competitiveness, builds reputation and customer trust, and provides significant benefits for production nurseries," Mr Ewings said.

"We market ourselves as compliant with the LTSS as well as the Australian Standard AS2303 – Tree Stock for Landscape Use, which provides technical above and below the ground information to evaluate the quality of tree material grown.

"This is well received, especially by local governments and the commercial sector. Meeting the NIASA LTSS enhances the value of the trees supplied across the industry, creating greater benefit and a better reputation for the industry."

To ensure top-grade trees, Mr Ewings recommends that nurseries meet Australian standards, maintain good hygiene practices, select quality stock and implement best practices. Maintaining high standards involves rigorous testing and hygiene practices, ensuring that the water and soil used are optimal, leading to healthier plants.

By adhering to NIASA accreditation standards and LTSS best management practices, Alpine Nurseries not only guarantees the excellence and longevity of its tree stock but also reinforces its commitment to sustainability and excellence in the horticulture industry.

The future of Alpine Nurseries

Alpine Nurseries uses the LTSS to capture data on tree measurements, potting and maintenance tasks to ensure compliance with high standards aiding as sales increase into the expanding urban environment, and as a training resource for apprentices. This ensures that future generations understand and maintain high-standards of tree production, securing the nursery's commitment to excellence for years to come.

According to Dan Ewings, to achieve this, continuous improvement is crucial.

"Producing trees that comply with best management practices helps create a reputation for quality, making the nursery a go-to supplier. It reduces stock loss, ensuring profitability and a competitive advantage," he said.

"Maintaining plant health and hygiene is essential, especially with changing weather patterns, to ensure resilience and longevity of tree stock.

"One of the biggest opportunities for Alpine Nurseries is supplying trees in volumes to the growing Greater Sydney region. As ever, the challenge lies in growing enough high-calibre stock to meet the demand without resorting to a substandard product."

Over the next five years, Alpine Nurseries aims to be recognised as the industry leader in growing trees that meet the Australian Standard, supported and further bolstered by NIASA and LTSS accreditation.

Supplying trees that thrive and create long-term satisfaction aligns with their mission of creating happiness and ensuring long-term benefits for both customers and the environment.

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Alpine Nurseries' dedication to maintaining tree stock standards and NIASA accreditation has positioned them as a trusted leader, ensuring long-term benefits for customers, the environment and the broader industry.

For more information about the Landscape Tree Stock Specification and NIASA accreditation contact Greenlife Industry Australia at info@greenlifeindustry.com.au or 1300 95 95 13.

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