



Greenlife Industry Australia

YOUR LEVY @ WORK

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Horticulture is an industry for all says PMA boss

Whilst many of the largest production nurseries are family-run businesses, there are plenty of career pathways available to horticulture enthusiasts and green thumbs who come from more families without a background in the industry.

Just ask Chris Sargent, managing director of Plants Management Australia, a horticultural licensing and marketing company which manages the protection and introduction of new plant varieties across the globe.

"I grew up surrounded by the emerald green landscapes of Tasmania and was introduced to horticulture from a young age by my grandmother, a pioneer of indoor gardening half a century before it became mainstream," he said.

"So, despite my family being third generation accountants, and encouraging me to take on a more black and white vocation, I pursued a horticulture apprenticeship straight out of school, working in both production nurseries and retail garden centres."

From that point Chris' career pathway is unique but also representative of the opportunities that the horticulture industry has to offer, both in Australia and overseas.

He set off to the United Kingdom at the age of 21, with his travels taking him through Europe, Canada, the United States and New Zealand before returning to Australia working across countless roles in horticulture production and sales along the way.

It was this broad exposure to all facets of the industry that would eventually lead Chris Sargent to take over the management of Plants Management Australia (PMA), the oldest licensing company in Australia.

PMA, which was instrumental in the establishment of Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) as law in Australia,

manages the intellectual property of plant breeders both in Australia and overseas.

"Our role is to take plants from concept to consumer on behalf of breeders," Chris said.

"We work closely with the breeder to identify key traits such as drought and heat tolerance, ease of propagation and potential for commercial applications and help them develop a plant that will be commercially successful.

"From there we support the end-to-end commercialisation of the cultivar from import and export and associated quarantine protocols all the way through to sales and marketing."

It's a role that may seem like a far cry from the production nursery apprenticeship Chris started when he was 18 but it's a career that has been shaped by various influences along the way according to the Tasmanian.

"I'd encourage all horticulture industry participants to expand their horizons where they can, whether that be overseas travel or exploring different roles within the horticulture industry domestically, it's these experiences which shape who I am today.

"Coming from an accounting family has also shaped my career and by a roundabout way, the broader industry. Although I chose not to pursue a career in accounting, I have inherited my parents' analytical brain and mindset and I see this manifest itself on a daily basis.

According to Chris, his experiences and success should also serve as a message for greenlife businesses as they implement their own recruitment strategies.

"Sometimes the best employees don't come from the places you may expect. By hiring on experience and attitude, you will broaden the perspectives available to you within your business," he said.

**Hort
Innovation**
Strategic levy investment

**NURSERY
FUND**

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Passionate about developing the next generation of horticulture workforce, Chris is a participant in the levy-funded project 'Developing Nursery Career Pathways' (NY19006). Led by Greenlife Industry Australia and RMCG, the project is working to highlight the dynamic career pathways within the nursery sector.

Through the development of an online careers hub and assets which will help articulate a narrative to school leavers and their advisers about the opportunities that await young people in the industry, the project hopes to support greenlife businesses in their pursuit of enthusiastic talent.

Daniel Ewing, General Manager for Alpine Nurseries and a member of the steering committee for 'Developing Nursery Career Pathways' (NY19006) says Chris' journey mirrors that of his own in many ways and something his employer is reaping the benefits for.

"My career path has seen me work in multiple sectors of horticulture and broaden my horizons by working in sales roles in allied businesses within the greenlife industry. My diverse pathway brings fresh perspectives to the day to day running of the business," Daniel said.

"As an industry we want to sing from the rooftops about the variety available to greenlife industry participants."

But according to Chris Sargent there is no better place to start a career.

"The greenlife industry has its own unique culture and new entrants into the industry will find themselves welcomed into a global family," he said.

"It's a community that shares the common language of horticulture, that connects with each other and with customers through a common bond with nature and that provides unbounded opportunities for growth.

"In the nursery industry you really can choose your own adventure."

For more information and resources on the unique career pathways that the greenlife industry has to offer, head to the Career Pathways Resources Hub here: <https://www.greenlifeindustry.com.au/greenlife-careers-hub/greenlife-careers>

For more information on Chris' story watch this video: <https://bit.ly/2UpOGDe>



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