



**Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia**

Australian Nursery & Garden Industry Environmental Sustainability Position



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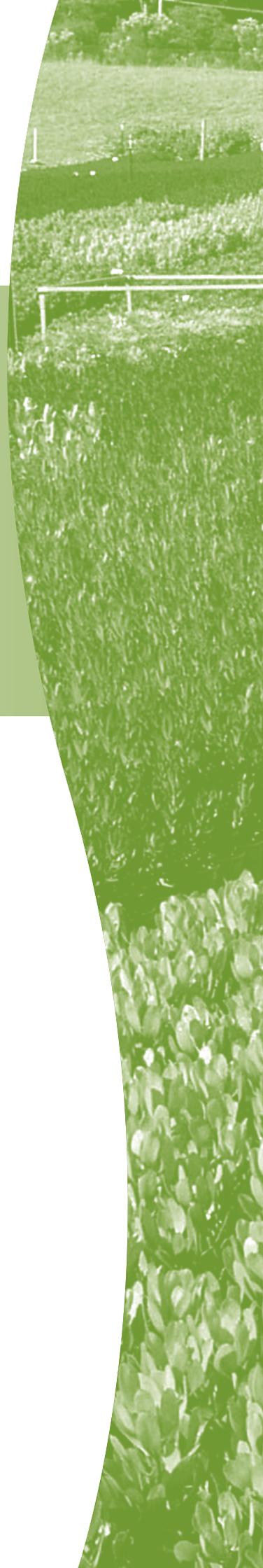
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The development of this document would not have been possible without input from the State and Territory Nursery & Garden Industry Associations.

First published in September 2009.



Foreword

The sustainable development of Australia's nursery and garden industry is a principal concern for Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA). In recent times, the importance of environmental stewardship has been brought into sharp focus through issues such as drought, climate change and natural resource management. These issues have required careful consideration and management by NGIA to ensure sound environmental outcomes are achieved.

This Position Document 'Australian Nursery & Garden Industry Environmental Sustainability Position' provides the public and other key stakeholder groups with a summary of NGIA's views on key environmental issues. This document captures the many environmental achievements of industry and reaffirms that NGIA is committed to achieving on-going improvements in its environmental performance and is well positioned to act positively in improving our environment. The publication of this Position Document firmly cements Australia's nursery and garden industry as a true, green industry that has long been concerned about working in harmony with the environment for a sustainable future.

This Position Document has been finalised by NGIA following feedback from State and Territory Nursery & Garden Industry Associations as well as members. NGIA gratefully acknowledges this assistance.

I highly recommend this Position Document for your reading.

Dr Anthony Kachenko
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February 2014

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1 Introduction

Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) is the peak national industry body representing producers, retailers and allied traders involved in the production of plants across all states and territories of Australia. In partnership with state and territory peak industry bodies, NGIA is responsible for overseeing the national development of the Australian nursery industry.

The nursery and garden industry provides significant economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits to the Australian community. Nationally, production nurseries support a diverse array of end users through the provision of green-life as starter crops or finished products. End users include retail outlets, landscapers, cut flower growers, orchardists, vegetable growers, interiorscapers, sustainable forestry and revegetation enterprises. Production areas are well established with some having been in existence and having industry representation for over 100 years. Along the supply chain, allied traders provide products and services that support the production, sale and health of green-life and include growing media and fertiliser manufacturers.

Owing to the diverse nature of nursery production, and its customer base, nurseries typically occur in urban, peri-urban and regional localities across Australia. As such, industry is confronted with a variety of environmental and natural resource impediments that require careful consideration and management to ensure sound environmental outcomes are achieved. NGIA recognises that maintaining a healthy environment is critical for a viable and thriving industry and is mindful that preserving the environment in a rapidly changing landscape is a necessity that shouldn't be overlooked. Government policy can also impact on the sustainability of industry and therefore it is imperative that industry is prepared for the challenges and opportunities that may arise through this process.

The Australian nursery industry has had a long history of embracing change and managing key environmental issues through investment in research, development and extension programs via the nursery products levy. The purpose of this Environmental Sustainability Position is to demonstrate that the industry remains committed to safeguarding the environment and minimising any adverse environmental impacts of its operations. To this end, the industry is committed to working with government, research organisations, the community and other stakeholders to address and manage key environmental issues.

This document covers environmental issues across all sectors of the supply chain from cradle to grave, including issues pertinent to the gardening public and the broader community. By responding to and undertaking activities in relation to key environmental issues such as climate change and natural resource management, the industry aims to ensure that these issues are addressed through a triple bottom line approach. This will inevitably result in the sustainable development of the Australian nursery and garden industry.



2 Mission Statement

Position the Australian nursery and garden industry as the community's leader on relevant environmental issues

3 A sustainable future begins here

In response to the issue of sustainability and environmental responsibility, NGIA has developed this Environmental Sustainability Position. This document demonstrates NGIA's commitment to environmental sustainability, the appropriate management of the association and its operations, the engagement of businesses in principles and applications of sustainability and the engagement of and collaboration with the broader community.

The industry recognises that sustainability of the environment directly affects the sustainability of businesses. NGIA is engaged in helping to build a sustainable future and has developed several initiatives to ensure the use of environmentally sound practices across the full supply chain. These initiatives cover a wide range of environmental issues, framed to encourage and not discourage the industry. NGIA is committed to promoting and encouraging environmentally sound business practices and is dedicated to assisting industry in working towards this goal.

NGIA is committed to maintaining an Environment & Technical Committee for the ongoing improvement of this Environmental Sustainability Position. This national committee will review this document biennially and make necessary revisions as/where required. An environmental risk assessment matrix, developed by the Environment & Technical Committee, underpins this document. This matrix depicts key environmental issues that have the potential to impact on the sustainability of industry and is reviewed every six months by the Environment & Technical Committee.



4 Environmental Best Practice Programs

4.1 Nursery Production Farm Management System (FMS)

The Australian nursery industry operates a tiered suite of internationally sought-after best management practice (BMP) programs nested under the Nursery Production Farm Management System (FMS).

These programs include:

- Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) BMP.
- EcoHort - environmental stewardship and natural resource management.
- BioSecure HACCP – biosecurity management.

These programs are available in separate streams, to production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets.

4.2 Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA)

NGIA encourages production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets to gain NIASA accreditation and operate in accordance with national Best Management Practices (BMP). These guidelines detail industry BMP for crop hygiene, crop management practices, water management and general site management and have been developed over two decades by respected industry representatives and researchers. They are reviewed annually by the National Accreditation and Certification Committee to ensure they cover relevant and current production and environmental issues. This national, third party audited scheme, developed in 1994, aims to enhance business professionalism, profitability and encourage continuous improvement whilst being mindful of the environment. The program can also be used as a reference guide to assist in the setup and establishment of new businesses. NIASA also serves as a base level of certification which must be achieved prior to EcoHort and BioSecure HACCP.

4.3 Environmental Management System – EcoHort

NGIA advocates the adoption of EcoHort across all production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets. EcoHort is an industry specific Environmental Management System (EMS) that provides businesses with a systematic approach to assess their environmental and natural resource management responsibilities, as part of their daily business management.

This program addresses the following key areas:

- Efficient irrigation
- Wastewater management
- Nutrient management
- Managing biodiversity
- Efficient energy use
- Waste minimisation
- Land and soil management
- Pest & weed management, and
- Recycling of waste products



The EcoHort guidelines provide businesses with the tools to ensure they can demonstrate to industry, government and the community, their sound environmental and natural resource stewardship and compliance with the diverse range of environmental legislation. This national third party audited EMS offers businesses with a risk assessment-based pathway to continuously improve their management systems. Businesses engaged with EcoHort must first achieve NIASA accreditation.

4.4 BioSecure HACCP – Guidelines for Managing Biosecurity

BioSecure HACCP is an industry-specific biosecurity program for production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets. This third party audited program provides businesses with a systematic approach to assess on-farm biosecurity hazards and responsibilities and it details how to best manage these identified risks. These guidelines have been developed following HACCP, which is the world recognised standard in risk management processes.

BioSecure HACCP guides businesses in:

- Assessing their current and future pest and disease risks
- The implementation of management strategies at critical control points
- Identifying internal and external threats to the integrity of a business biosecurity preparedness
- The establishment of an effective internal quarantine process for both imported and exported plant material
- The conduct of internal audits and self-improvement systems

Businesses engaged with BioSecure HACCP must first achieve NIASA accreditation.

4.5 Environmental Best Practice for Garden Centres

4.5.1 Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme

The Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS) is a national third party audited industry managed scheme, designed to raise retail standards, encourage business improvement and promote excellence in garden retailing. NGIA encourages engagement in this scheme across all garden centres throughout Australia. Embedded in this scheme are four environmental modules to provide businesses with a high level of environmental awareness. These modules provide industry standard guidelines on water, weeds, chemicals and waste management to ensure businesses reduce their environmental footprint. A key component of this program is to position AGCAS businesses as a trusted and reputable source of information for the general public.



5 Biosecurity preparedness

One of the biggest threats to the Australian environment is the introduction of exotic pests. Owing to Australia's geographic isolation, it has remained relatively free from many exotic pests such as Sudden Oak Death (*Phytophthora ramorum*), that have significantly affected other parts of the world. To ensure Australia remains proactive in managing biosecurity, a 'whole of community' approach, involving State and Federal Governments, industry and the wider public is required.

NGIA acknowledges that it plays a vital role in the biosecurity continuum, and as such, maintains a policy position on biosecurity referred to as 'Reducing the Pest Risk' and is actively engaged in several biosecurity initiatives across Australia. NGIA is also a member of Plant Health Australia (PHA) further demonstrating its willingness to participate in this arena.

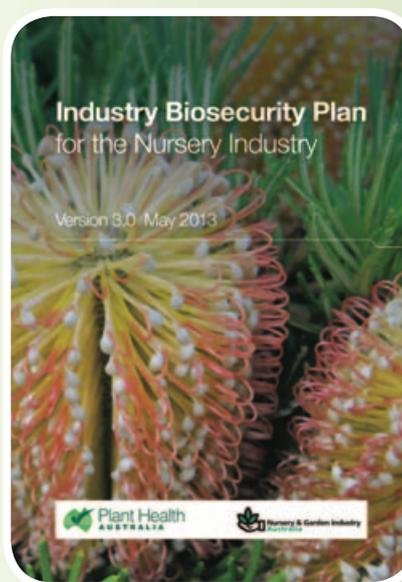
NGIA has developed a number of supporting tools and documents to assist industry in its biosecurity responsibilities. Resources include:

- Biosecurity Manual for the Nursery Production Industry
- Pest Fact Sheets
- Best Practice Videos
- Pest Management Plans
- Farm Biosecurity Signage

5.1 Industry Biosecurity Plan for the Nursery Industry

Developed in 2005 the Industry Biosecurity Plan for the Nursery Industry provides a blueprint for the exclusion, eradication and control of key pests relevant to the Australian nursery industry. This plan is a living document and undergoes review by the Industry Biosecurity Group annually to embrace changes to industry biosecurity. Reviews to the document saw a version released in 2008 and another in May 2013.

This plan is vital to ensure industry has the capacity to better prepare for and respond to, incursions of pests ensuring the future sustainability and viability of the industry. As part of the Industry Biosecurity Plan for the Nursery Industry, NGIA has developed contingency plans for key pests which provide background information on the pest biology and available control measures to assist with preparedness in the event of an incursion. Each contingency plan provides guidelines to assist in developing a pest specific Response Plan.



5.2 Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed

In 2005, NGIA became a signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD). As a signatory to the EPPRD, NGIA is at the forefront of developments in biosecurity. The EPPRD is a progressive partnership arrangement that sees Australian industries and Governments cooperating as equal parties in the management of emergency plant pests (EPPs).

An EPP can be defined as a:

- Known exotic plant pest
- Variant form of a plant pest already established in Australia
- New serious plant pest
- Plant pest that is being officially controlled in Australia but requiring a significant emergency response to ensure that there is not a large scale epidemic of regional or national significance

As part of this deed, NGIA is directly involved in categorising the EPPs based on their likely environmental, human health, trade, economic and industry impacts. In the event of an incursion, NGIA is also directly involved in decision making about mounting and managing EPPs relevant to industry. In 2013 the nursery and garden industry agreed to establish a biosecurity levy, to be enacted during an EPP Incursion thereby meeting its funding obligations under the EPPRD.



6 Climate change and variability

Australian horticultural industries (which include nursery production) fall under the umbrella of Agriculture, which is responsible for approximately 16% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Of this 16%, Australia's combined horticultural emissions account for approximately 1.2%. The Australian nursery and garden industry has the capacity through the production of living products to make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and may also play an integral role in mitigating climate change and variability.

Historically, the industry has shown to be resilient and adaptive in response to environmental pressures; no more noticeable than the ongoing drought which continues to impact across large expanses of Australia. In light of this adversity, the industry has the capacity to cope with climate change and remain viable in a highly variable climate. In February 2011, the Australian nursery and garden industry released a policy position on climate change and variability in order to further cement its position on this issue.

NGIA has developed a carbon foot printing tool to estimate emissions from production nurseries. This tool can provide full lifecycle and cost/benefit analysis to measure the environmental impacts of specific nursery lines from cradle to grave. This model will benchmark the carbon footprint of production nurseries, identify areas of improvement and prioritise potential actions for mitigation through offsets or emission reductions. Emission benchmarking, based on nursery 'best practice' emissions, will be reviewed and updated as technology improves.

NGIA recognises that greater adoption of renewable energy technologies is a sound approach in reducing the demand on non-renewable energy, hence reducing emissions. NGIA has developed a Renewable Energy Calculator for growers to evaluate energy co-generation, namely solar and wind power for the generation of electricity onsite. Utilising renewable technologies in lieu of non-renewable energy may present opportunities for growers to also potentially reduce economic burdens. Fact sheets have also been developed to guide industry on renewable technologies.



6.1 Urban forestry

Urban forestry - encompassing the planning, design, establishment and management of trees and forest stands in public or private areas - has become widely accepted both locally and internationally as an essential element in the built environment. In addition to the amenity value, the urban forest provides a multitude of environmental, human health and wellbeing benefits including:

- Improved air quality through interception of pollutants and oxygen production
- Reducing the impact of the Urban Heat Island Effect
- Improving human mental and physical health
- Provision of habitat for plants and animals
- Consumption of CO₂ through photosynthesis
- Maintaining ground water hydrology and reducing the load of rainfall on stormwater infrastructure
- Production of food for humans
- Stabilisation of climate
- Maintaining soil organic matter
- Enhancing soil nitrogen and recycling of nutrients
- Provide a sense of place and enhanced community
- Improved aesthetics

NGIA urges greater recognition of the benefits associated with urban forests and the role they play mitigating climate change and variability. In 2009, NGIA hosted the inaugural Urban GreenScapes Symposium to position green-life and plants as an integral part of the solution to climate change by presenting the research and the reasoning in the areas of environment, health/wellbeing and planning to support this.

Since the 2009 Urban Greenscape Symposium, NGIA has actively supported and funded research focused on the benefits of the urban forest with leading researchers from around the country including the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). NGIA has also invested in the development of Australian data for use in the iTree suite of software tools that allow for urban forest analysis and an assessment of the benefits provided by the urban forest. This peer reviewed tool is free to use and allows urban forest managers to quantify the urban forest as a community asset.

In 2011, NGIA became a founding partner of the National Urban Forest Alliance (NUFA) which is an alliance of key stakeholders such as Arborists and councils, who have a focus on the promotion and investment into Australia's Urban Forest. The vision of NUFA is to promote a thriving, sustainable and diverse Australian urban forest that supports healthy ecosystems which are valued and cared for by all Australians as an essential environmental, economic, and community asset for future generations.



7 Managing water

Water is considered a finite resource, and one that industry is dependent upon for the production and care of plants. Industry recognises that managing water efficiently is a key driver to sound environmental performance and is committed to achieving improvements in water use efficiency across whole of industry. In recent years, industry has developed several initiatives that demonstrate the Australian nursery and garden industry is an efficient and responsible water user.

Given the significant importance water has to the nursery and garden industry, NGIA maintains a policy position on water.

7.1.1 Nursery Industry Water Management Best Practice Guidelines

Developed in 1997, with the third edition published in 2010, these guidelines promote best practice water management in production nurseries. These guidelines highlight five key areas to achieve sustainable water use:

1. Efficient water use to minimise water demand
2. Increased reuse of waste water to minimise water demand
3. Efficient management of sediment and litter
4. Maximum retention of nutrients to improve efficiency of production and maintain water quality
5. Environmentally responsible use of plant protection products to promote quality plants

7.1.2 Smart Approved Water Mark

NGIA in cooperation with Water Services Association of Australia, Australian Water Association and Irrigation Australia developed the Smart Approved Water Mark program. This independent program is Australia's national labelling scheme for outdoor water efficient products and services and is supported by the National Water Initiative, and the Water Smart Australia program. Both NIASA and EcoHort programs have been Smart Approved WaterMark certified as approved services since 2010.



7.1.3 Water Management Toolbox

NGIA is committed to ensuring production nurseries are equipped with the most up-to-date irrigation system delivering optimum water use efficiencies. To achieve this, The Water Management Toolbox (www.watertoolbox.ngi.org.au) has been developed to assist production nurseries in on-farm water management.

This resource comprises of simple calculators for growers to manage nursery irrigation and drainage water to support sustainable and responsible use of water resources as well as the industry accreditation, certification and training programs. The calculators are derived from:

- The popular industry book titled 'Managing Water in Plant Nurseries'
- The industry training program Waterwork
- Existing industry programs and Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland

7.1.4 Managing nutrients in production nurseries

NGIA supports the pragmatic use of fertilisers to minimise nutrient leaching from potting media during irrigation of containerised plants. Research by NGIA into experimental reed beds, as a mechanism to filter nutrient laden run-off water from nurseries, resulted in a 90% reduction of nitrate and 96% of the phosphate present in nursery run-off. These reed beds can also eliminate Phytophthora.

Where feasible, NGIA encourages the uptake of this technology as a viable mechanism to efficiently remove nutrients and organic matter from nursery run-off.



8 Invasive plants

Industry is committed towards lessening the impact of invasive plants on the natural environment and halting the spread of garden escapes. The nursery and garden industry is responsibly working towards eliminating known invasive plants from sale to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. To achieve this, industry consults scientific literature to identify potentially invasive plants. In recent years, NGIA has taken significant steps forward in tackling the spread of invasive plants and maintains a policy position on invasive plants since 2009.

8.1 Grow Me Instead



The national *Grow Me Instead* (GMI) educational program is the largest and most important initiative undertaken by NGIA to reduce the spread of potentially invasive plants. This program has been designed to educate stakeholders including landscapers, government, industry, gardeners and the wider public about potentially invasive plants and the impact they may have on the environment.

For each state/territory, a GMI booklet has been developed that identifies potentially invasive garden plants and suggests superior, non-invasive alternative plants. The GMI program has also been developed into a rich online resource

(www.growmeinstead.com.au) with an interactive database. Through this program, NGIA is committed to educating the public about making responsible plant choices and managing potentially invasive plants they may already have.

8.2 Plant Risk Assessment Tool

In conjunction with a number of key Botanical Gardens, Regulatory Agencies and Researchers, NGIA has developed an online weed risk assessment tool (www.plantrisktool.com.au) based on peer reviewed science. This database can be used by growers, retailers and consumers to determine the weed risk potential of specific plants based on regional climatic data.

8.3 National Plant Labelling Guidelines

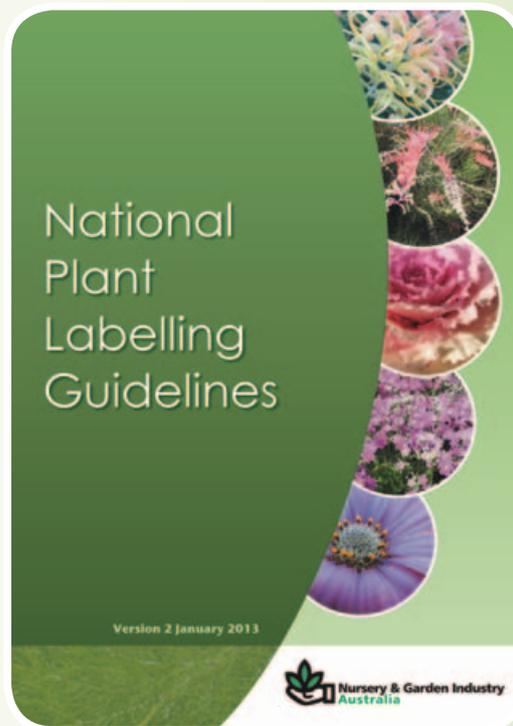
NGIA recognises the importance of correct naming and labelling of plants, including the use of full species names. In collaboration with plant nomenclature experts, industry stakeholders and horticulturists, NGIA has developed national plant labelling guidelines, which were updated in January 2013. These guidelines provide direction on how to correctly label plants and include:

- Correct botanical names – nomenclature
- Intellectual property – Plant Breeders Rights and Trademarks
- Plant growth requirements and characteristics
- Potentially harmful plants – health and environment

8.4 Plant Safely

The Plant Safely website (www.plantsafely.com.au) aims to highlight some of the potentially hazardous gardening items, organisms and activities commonly found in gardens and provide useful information, resources and links to help reduce the risks that they may pose.

Topics covered by the Plant Safely website include invasive plants, poisonous plants as well as general information on the safe use of garden chemicals. This website is the only comprehensive garden safety site on the web and provides easy links to organisations that are subject matter experts on issues of gardening safety.



9 Managing waste

NGIA promotes the reduction in waste materials entering landfill. The industry is committed to minimising waste and maximising efficiencies by reducing, re-using, recycling and donating waste where appropriate.

This is demonstrated by the industry's use of bark and coconut fibre (coir), waste by-products of timber and coconut harvesting, as a component of the raw ingredients that constitute a professional growing media and waste minimisation programs incorporated in EcoHort.

10 Education initiatives

NGIA recognises that educating staff and business owners about key environmental issues is vital to ensure industry is adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills to competently tackle these issues head on. A skilled industry will cultivate innovation and a responsiveness to change that will enable it to command the knowledge required to excel as the community's leader on relevant environmental issues. To achieve this goal, industry has developed multiple training packages including:

- EcoHort – An introduction to EMS for production nurseries
- BioSecure HACCP – Guidelines for managing biosecurity in nursery production
- Environmental Management for Retail Garden Centres – How to implement EMS in retail garden centres
- Waterwork series – Water treatment, irrigation, recycling and fertigation options for production nurseries and retail garden centres
- Recognising and Monitoring Pests and Diseases
- Control & Management of Pests
- Implementing Integrated Pest Management
- Growing Media – Handling and physico-chemical properties of growing media in the context of industry Best Practice

These training packages are offered through face to face workshops and field days as well as online via the NGIA eLearning portal (www.ngia.talentlms.com).

10.1 *Best Practice Manual for Pesticide Application in the Nursery and Garden Industry*

The nursery and garden industry recognises that safe pesticide use is vital to protect individuals and the environment and promotes best practices for handling, storage and disposal of pesticides. NGIA has developed BMP for pesticide application to assist production nurseries identify and understand the range of pesticide application equipment available and the key issues relating to the use of pesticides in the nursery environment. An industry tailored pesticide management diary to record pesticide application events has also been developed to further assist in BMP.

11 Environmental extension

11.1 Industry Development Officer network

Extension of nursery and garden industry research and development is paramount to improve the environmental standing of industry. The Industry Development Officer (IDO) network, established in the early 1990s, is the primary conduit for the extension of industry research and development to businesses. This valuable resource of qualified and experienced professionals provides the skills and expertise required by business to ensure they operate in an efficient, productive and sustainable manner.

The IDO network is also responsible for:

- Developing research and development projects
- Managing and/or facilitating training
- Representing industry on environmental
- Delivering industry developed environmental BMP to businesses



11.2 Environmental communication

NGIA publish monthly Nursery Papers which provide information to the whole of industry on key issues that impact industry. The Nursery Papers report on research and development outcomes, emerging environmental issues and business sustainability. The information presented is clear, concise and includes actionable conclusions to assist in greater uptake.

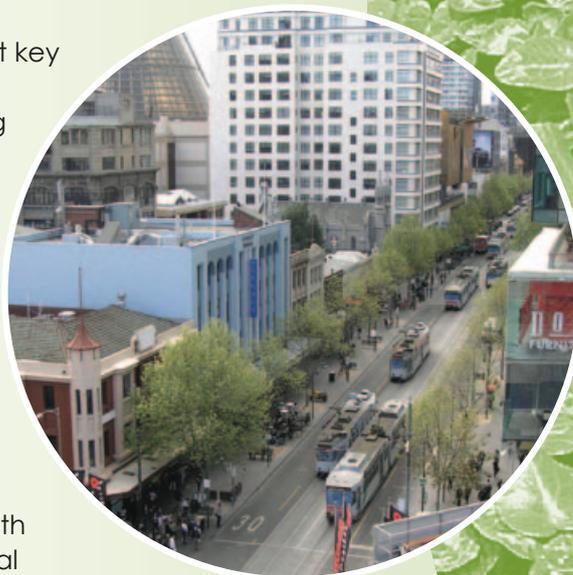


NGIA also provides targeted environmental communications through social media including the Your Levy at Work Blog, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages as well as the NGIA website.

12 Participating in the broader environmental debate

Industry believes that increasing public awareness about key environmental and sustainability issues is paramount to achieve behavioural change and is committed to being a community leader on relevant issues. Likewise industry also believe that there is scope for those in positions of influence such as politicians and regulators to effect positive change at the macro level by developing favourable policies and processes to incorporate greenlife as an essential component to urban design.

Many Australians are keen to make change at a grass roots level, by making a difference in their own backyard. Indeed, 89% of Australians want more trees and green space in their local environment. In order to achieve this, retail garden centres are well positioned with experience and an understanding of local environmental issues. Furthermore, they are seen by the community as a credible source of information on key environmental issues.



12.1 202020Vision

202020 Vision is the latest marketing campaign facilitated by the Australian nursery industry with the objective to increase urban greenspace by 20% by the year 2020. This will be achieved through influencing the influencers namely government at Local, State and Federal levels, major developers, town planner's and landscape architects. The campaign provides a collaborative platform of information and facilitates the exchange of ideas between key communities in order to understand, recognise and establish urban green space co-benefits.

202020 Vision is supported by the body of research conducted both locally and internationally of the benefits of the urban forest. Further details on the campaign can be found at www.202020vision.com.au



13 Research & development

Key environmental issues such as climate change and variability, biosecurity, water availability and invasive plants will continue to impact on the long term health and sustainability of the nursery and garden industry. These key environmental issues, where they are managed well, can present our industry with opportunities for growth.

In order for Industry to identify these opportunities and enhance industry's capacity for innovation, the nursery and garden industry is committed to investing in research and development. NGIA's research and development program aims to lessen the impact of industry on key components of the environment and conserve and enhance Australia natural resources.

By linking with national research institutions and external stakeholders, the nursery and garden industry will minimise duplication and maximise transfer of knowledge to industry through greater research and development outputs. All completed levy funded research and development reports can be accessed on the NGIA website via a searchable database.

Research and development will enhance industry capacity for innovation, expertise and knowledge to promote **a sustainable future & position the industry as an environmental steward and leader.**



14 Further information

If you would like more information about the NGIA Environmental Sustainability Position, contact NGIA on:

(02) 8861 5100

or info@ngia.com.au;

or visit www.ngia.com.au



This Policy Position has been funded by Horticulture Australia Limited using the Nursery Industry Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.