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Training, Careers & Employment in Horticulture

According to recent research, Amenity Horticulture is one of Australia's fastest growing industries, closely linked to urban development and lifestyle. Nursery and garden enterprises employ approximately 30 per cent of all workers in the 'agriculture' industry. Does a 'fast-growing industry' require special attention by government to assist it in the skilling and employment of personnel into the industry? Or, does the responsibility of this role lie on the shoulders of industry bodies and/or individual employers? The answer is both. In this Nursery Paper we look at training, careers and employment in the 'fast-growing' Amenity Horticulture Industry, how the Government is helping us in these areas and what we as an industry are doing to help ourselves.



Training, Careers & Employment in Horticulture

Is there a skills shortage?

The short answer is yes.

Skill Shortages research is undertaken by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) on an ongoing basis.

DEEWR's skill shortages research underpins a number of programs designed to address skill shortages, including:

- the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL), which is used by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to target the skill stream of the Migration program to occupations which are in shortage and which have good longer term prospects.
- the National Skills Needs List (NSNL), which is used by DEEWR for determining the eligibility of employers and their Australian Apprentices for a range of Australian Government training incentives and initiatives.
- the Productivity Places Program, which is part of the Government's Skilling Australia for the Future initiative, providing 701,000 new training places over five years to address skills shortages, increase workforce participation, and drive productivity growth.

Skill shortage research also addresses a need for information about skill needs in each State and Territory to underpin policy, planning and resource allocation.

Additional information supplied by the Labour Economics Office of DEEWR states:

'In the year to November 2008, employment of Gardeners (which includes general and landscape gardeners and arborists) decreased slightly, down 3 per cent, while employment of Greenkeepers increased by 3 per cent. Employment of Nurserypersons decreased by 26 per cent.'

'DEEWR research shows there to be no shortages of Greenkeepers and General Gardeners, with both occupations filling more than 60 per cent of vacancies within four weeks of advertising. Employers advertising

for Nurserypersons had mixed results with recruitment difficulties evident in regional areas but no shortages in metropolitan areas. Both Arborists and Landscape Gardeners were found to be in shortage, with employers filling less than half of their vacancies within four weeks. A number of vacancies did not attract any applications at all.'

'In general, employer's comments suggest that the main difficulties which exist in recruiting for these trades are finding qualified staff, finding staff with specialist or extensive knowledge and experience, an ageing workforce, comparatively poor wages and conditions compared to other trades and staff retention'.

2009 Environmental Scan of the AgriFood Industry

This Scan, published by AgriFood Skills Australia (AFISC) in early 2009, found three defining skills and workforce development issues to be addressed and to further strengthen the industry:

- Attraction and retention of skilled and semi-skilled workers
- Adoption of higher skill levels across the workforce
- Adoption and diffusion of new research, practice and technology across the industry.

'National Skills Shortage List

	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	SA	TAS	NT	WA
Environmental Research Scientist	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Landscape Architect	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Nursery Person	R, M.D							
Landscape Gardener	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Arborist	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

Key: S = state wide shortage D = state wide recruitment difficulty
 M = metropolitan shortage M.D = metropolitan recruitment difficulty
 R = regional shortage R.D = regional recruitment difficulty

Information correct as of July 2009. Further information can be found on www.workplace.gov.au

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Current Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) for Horticulture

- Landscape Gardener
 - Tree Surgeon
- * The MODL is reviewed twice a year to take into consideration existing and emerging skills shortages.*
Further information: www.immi.gov.au

National Skills Needs List Current Skills Need List for Horticulture Occupations

- Floriculture Worker*
 - Gardener*
 - Green Keeper*
 - Landscape Gardener
 - Nursery Person*
 - Parks and Gardens Tradesperson*
 - Tree Surgeon
- * Must be in rural and regional localities identified on the Rural and Regional Eligible Workplace Postcodes list.*

Statistical Information on Australian Vocational Education & Training: Apprentice and Traineeships

Number of Apprentices & Trainees in-training in the state VET system

Qualification	30 Jun 07	30 Jun 08	Most current information available: up to 30 June 2008 Statistics supplied by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
Cert III Horticulture	883	721	
Cert III Hort (Arboriculture)	259	268	
Cert III Hort (Floriculture)	12	10	
Cert III Hort (Landscape)	1468	1693	
Cert III Hort (Retail Nursery)	45	58	
Cert III Hort (Wholesale Nursery)	237	285	
Cert III Hort (Parks & Gardens)	903	965	
Cert III Hort (Turf)	1040	1066	

What is Government doing about Training, Careers & Employment?

The Australian Government's Skilling Australia for the future initiative includes the following programs:

Group Training Organisations

Group Training Organisations employ apprentices and trainees and then place them with employers for as long as they are required. They manage the paperwork for wages, allowances, workers compensation, superannuation etc and are there throughout the period of the apprenticeship or traineeship. There is a national network of over 150 Group Training Organisations around Australia. Further information: www.grouptraining.com.au

Regional Employment Initiative

The Australian Government works with state, territory and local governments, and regional authorities to provide regional migration programs. The Regional Outreach Officer (ROO) network plays a pivotal role in supporting regional migration. There is an ROO in every state and territory in Australia. Further Information: www.immi.gov.au

Visas and Immigration

Information on skilled migration focusing on employer questions and issues. Further information: www.immi.gov.au

Mature workers mean business

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission supplies case studies on recruiting mature workers. The site also offers strategies to attract and retain mature workers. Further information: www.humanrights.gov.au

Job Wise

This Australian Government site is dedicated to promoting mature age employment. Further information: www.jobwise.gov.au

Fair Work Australia

A one-stop-shop for education, information and advice on all aspects of the new workplace relations system. Fair Work Australia (FWA) will support the new

workplace relations laws and will oversee the practical operation of the Fair Work Act 2009.

FWA has the power to vary awards, make minimum wage orders, approve agreements, determine unfair dismissal claims and make orders on such matters as good faith bargaining and industrial action. Further information: www.fwa.gov.au

Productivity Places Program

In 2008 the Federal Government launched the Productivity Places Program to establish more than 700,000 additional training places over five years. Of these places, a proportion will be targeted at Australian Apprenticeships. This Program is aimed at people outside the workforce and current employees.

The Program is accessible through arrangements established by individual States and Territories. The Program is available only in "approved qualifications" including Horticulture qualifications, and under specific eligibility criteria.

Put simply, individual states and territories create a list of priority qualifications through various research methods. These lists are then put out to tender for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Once the tender process is complete a list of qualifications and training providers will be made available by the state for individuals and employers to access. Individuals are then invited to apply for these PPP qualifications via the RTO application process.

At the moment, no states have released their confirmed list as many are in the tender phase.

Further information for each state: www.skillsandtraininginfo.com.au
Further information (federal): www.deewr.gov.au

Trade Training Centres

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program is an element of the Commonwealth Government's Education Revolution. It will

enable all secondary schools to apply for funding of between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million for Trade Training Centres.

Trade Training Centres are being established to help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification and help address skill shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries, including horticulture. Schools will have an opportunity to apply for funding to build new, or upgrade, existing trade or vocational education and training facilities.

There are 18 secondary schools incorporating horticulture qualifications in their application that have successfully applied for this funding to date.

QLD	Djarragun College
NSW	Bombala High School Cowra High School Denison Secondary College (Kelso Campus) Duval High School Murwillumbah High School Parkes High School St Joseph's High (Aberdeen)
VIC	Bendigo Senior Secondary College Northland Secondary College
TAS	Guilford Young College Tasmanian Polytechnic (Claremont)
SA	Balaklava High School Grant High School Ocean View College St Martins Lutheran College Urrbrae Agricultural High
WA	Luurnpa Catholic School

Further information: www.tradetrainingcentres.deewr.gov.au

Australian Apprenticeships Centres

Australian Apprenticeships centres are contracted by are contracted by the Australian Government to provide one-stop shops for those seeking to hire Australian Apprentices or to take up an Australian Apprenticeship. Further Information: www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au

National, State and Territory Governments have put in place a range of financial incentives to encourage employers to take up Australian Apprenticeships. The National Skills Needs List is used to determine eligibility for the following incentives:

Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarship providing \$1000 over two years for Australian Apprentices employed by a small or medium employer (less than 500 employees), undergoing a Cert III or IV qualification leading to employment in a skills shortage trade.

Support for Mid-Career Apprentices providing financial support for mid-career Australians (aged 30 years or more) to upgrade their skills through an Australian Apprenticeship in a trade experiencing a skill shortage.

Mature Aged Worker Incentive an employer of a disadvantaged worker (aged 45 years or older) may attract a special \$750 Mature Aged Worker Commencement Incentive and a \$750 Mature Aged Worker Completion Incentive.

Apprenticeship Wage Top-Up Australian Apprentices who are aged 30 years or under when they commence their Australian Apprenticeship and are in their first or second year of training at the Certificate III or IV level in a trade experiencing a skills shortage may be eligible for tax-free payments of \$2000 paid in four \$500 installments.

Tools for Your Trade provides vouchers that can be used to buy a tool kit worth up to \$800 for eligible Australian Apprentices who have completed the first three months of their training.

Apprenticeship Training (Fee) Vouchers

valued at up to \$500 may be available to eligible first and second year apprentices undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship in a skills shortage area.

Rural & Regional Skills Shortage Incentive to boost training in rural and regional Australia a special commencement incentive of \$1,000 may be available for an employer in rural or regional Australia who employs an Australian Apprentice in an eligible national skills needs area at the Certificate III, IV or selected higher qualification. Rural and regional Australia comprises those workplace locations identified on the Rural and Regional Eligible Workplace Postcodes list.

Exceptional Circumstances Drought Declared Incentive to encourage primary producers who hold an Exceptional Circumstances Drought Area Certificate to continue to offer skill development and employment opportunities in a declared drought area.

Australian School-Based Apprenticeship Incentive these incentives are designed particularly to support employers who provide ongoing employment opportunities for Australian school-based apprentices, assisting them to make a smooth transition from school to work.

Assistance to Australian Apprentices with Disabilities provides wage assistance to eligible employers and additional funding to support the off-the-job training to eligible apprentices.

The list of incentives offered changes regularly. The best way to find out about these incentives and others that might be available is to contact your closest Australian Apprenticeship Centre. www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au. You can also visit state based websites for additional information:

QLD:	www.trainandemploy.qld.gov.au www.smallbusinesssolutions.qld.gov.au www.employment.qld.gov.au
NSW:	www.apprenticeship.det.nsw.edu.au
ACT:	www.det.act.gov.au
VIC:	www.skills.vic.gov.au
SA:	www.dfeest.sa.gov.au
TAS:	www.skills.tas.gov.au
NT:	www.det.nt.gov.au
WA:	www.det.wa.edu.au



Luke Berendsen - From TAFE Student to Level 4 Traineeship, state winner in the 2009 CNP Student Scholarship Program and full-time employment in wholesale nursery.

Diana Fullalove - From 'work for the dole' initiative to award winning apprentice, 2009 CNP National Student Scholarship winner and employed full-time in Production Horticulture.



What is Industry doing about Training, Careers & Employment?

It is vital that industry be involved in state and federal discussion, research and committees to ensure a voice for our industry in the areas of training, careers, and employment. NGIA represents the industry nationally with two seats on the Board and the Industry Standing Committee of AgriFood Skills Australia and a seat on the Rural and Regional Skills Advisory Committee. Such positions ensure industry input into the research for such initiatives as the Productivity Placement Programs, Vocational Training Orders (Apprenticeships), Environmental Scans, Industry Training Packages and much, much more. The industry also takes part in many state and national surveys, discussions and research projects on

a regular basis for government departments such as DEEWR and the Department of Education and Training.

Industry Training

The Nursery & Garden Industry provide industry-specific training in each state of Australia. This training, in the form of short and targeted workshops, supports the up-skilling of existing industry personnel outside of the formal training provided by registered training organisations. Put simply, the NGI training bridges the gap of knowledge that some formal training can not provide nor is flexible enough for industry personnel to access.

Nursery & Garden Industry (NGI) State Associations have access to 16 NGIA-developed national workshops covering a multitude of topics, suitable for various levels of experience - whether it be pest & disease; environmentally friendly practices; growing media or business planning.

Industry Development Officers and Business Development Officers are provided in each State through a levy funded project. This resource is to assist in research and development extension, training and skills development for the industry. Training run by each State Association is subsidised by levy funds.

Further information: www.ngia.com.au



Green-Life Careers Project

Nursery and Garden Industry Australia has launched the Green-Life Careers Project. The objectives of this project are:

- To raise the profile and to stimulate broader interest in careers within our sector of industry;
- To encourage young people and mature age career changers to consider a career and pursue a relevant vocational course within the sector;
- To find ways to encourage career counsellors and parents to support the propositions of the Nursery and Garden Industry;
- To assist in the retention of existing employees and employers in the industry;
- To forge new and strengthen existing relationships and networking between industry and relevant educators and educational intuitions;
- To drive traffic to the Green-Life Careers website;
- To enhance and educate the broader community in respect of NGI and convey positive messages across all aspects from climate change and the environment, urban greening, health and wellbeing, Life is a Garden, pest and diseases, retail and the diversity of career possibilities.

Some examples of work currently being undertaken within the Green-Life Careers project can be found below;

Green-Life Careers website

NGIA has launched a web based project which contains a multitude of fact sheets and video representations of various career options, incorporating all sectors of the Amenity Horticulture industry from Production Nursery to Arboriculture. It also contains training information and training provider contact details; jobs vacant listings; positions wanted listings; employer information including federal award and government contacts.

This site aims to bring all relevant industry associations and stakeholders together in a one-stop-shop for career and employment services.

Further information:

www.greenlifecareers.com.au

aLife Project

The aLife Project is a web-based and DVD resource which profiles career options and targets school-leavers, careers advisors and parents. This project includes around 100 profiles from various industries around Australia, and NGIA, with funding assistance from AgriFood Skills Australia, has taken part in this project via three Horticulture profiles (Production Nursery, Landscaping and Apprenticeship in Horticulture).

aLife DVDs will be distributed to every secondary school, TAFE and careers advisor in Australia. aLife profiles also have a direct link to the Green-Life Careers website increasing the traffic to this dedicated site and increasing the knowledge of the many career options available in our industry.

Further information: www.alife.net.au

SkillsOne

SkillsOne is an award winning web-based careers site incorporating all industries and is well used by career advisors networks around Australia. From SkillsOne, and with funding support from AgriFood Skills Australia, NGIA has sourced a variety of industry relevant career videos for placement on the Green-Life Careers website. There are also a strategically positioned links on the SkillsOne homepage and the Rural & Related careers page directing traffic to the Green-Life Careers website.

A guest blog appearance by NGIA National Training & Recognition Manager, Fiona Kelly, will soon be included on the site.

Further information: www.skillsone.com.au

Careers Expos

Increasingly, Nursery & Garden Industry Australia will be involved in various careers expos around the country either via direct involvement or by using state or federal bodies as representatives. Continued and increased dialogue by NGIA with various government departments will assist in the number of representatives around the country spreading the word for our industry.

Printed material is in production for use at Careers events which will direct interested parties to the Green-Life Careers website. Some State Associations currently have existing printed material and attend careers expos in their areas. The national project will assist in a more uniform approach and may assist in funding for State Associations to increase their presence at state events.

Industry Educators & Associations

NGIA has increased the dialogue with industry educators around Australia with regular information updates and opportunities to work together. This effort to strengthen existing, and forge new relationships has so far seen a significant increase in educators contacting NGIA to update their industry knowledge and educators being involved in industry skills discussions and projects.

There has been a concerted effort by NGIA to include all state and national associations in the Amenity Horticulture Industry in career and training discussions. To ensure that career and employment information for the whole of industry can be easily found by those searching for careers or employment, it is important that all stakeholders are involved.

Advertising

A national careers advertising campaign commenced in July 2009 which places 20 industry specific advertisements in News Limited newspapers around Australia over a 12 month period. The campaign consists of four advertisement designs containing catchy opening lines such as Green is the New Black; Get Out. Get Dirty; Is Green Your Colour? and Want a Career that Grows & Grows?

In Summary

Nursery & Garden Industry Australia is dedicated to the industry's future, and the projects listed above are some of the ways in which to improve the skills shortage for the industry. This is not a complete list and there are sure to be projects being conducted by various other associations and government departments that NGIA has not been made aware of but would be keen to know about.

We are eager to hear from all stakeholders on additional ideas; project support; funding assistance; feedback or questions on any of the information listed above. Contact Fiona Kelly, National Training Manager, NGIA on (02) 9876 5200 or email careers@ngia.com.au.