

Nursery Papers

June 2004
Issue no. 5



Landscape opportunities

The landscaping market continues to rise. In the year ending 30 June 2003, the distribution of nursery and garden product to landscapers rose by an estimated 15.4% and was valued at \$1.4 billion.

The landscaping market share is the largest of any distribution channel within the nursery and garden industry at 25%.

Given these statistics and the continuing demand for 'do it for me' landscapes, production and wholesale nurseries should seriously consider tapping into the landscaper market in order to benefit from this growing sector.

This *Nursery Paper* explores how production nurseries can better service the landscaper market by asking landscapers what they want and discovering some helpful hints from producers already doing it.

• Your Levy at Work •

The production and distribution of the *Nursery Papers* is funded jointly by your Nursery Industry Levy and the Commonwealth Government via Horticulture Australia Limited.



Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia



Know-how for Horticulture™

Tapping into the growing landscaper market

If you think that supplying the landscaper market means you can get away with supplying lower quality plants and limited service, think again.

Landscapers demand high quality plants (and lots of them) and top service.

Kerry Bradley – Back Gardening, Sydney

Kerry Bradley from Back Gardening installs and maintains home garden landscapes in the northern suburbs of Sydney. He regularly buys plants from Sydney's wholesale trade markets.

"I like the wider selection at the trade markets and how they have become a one stop shop. And I always judge the plant according to its quality rather than who grew it," said Kerry.

"I will often knock a plant out of its pot and check that the root system is healthy and fills the pot. I also look at how well the plant has been pruned."

Kerry looks after his clients as much as possible and provides them with a guarantee. It is for this reason that he thoroughly assesses plant quality and he appreciates a plant guarantee from growers.



Tips for producers

- Only healthy plants for this market!
- Consider supplying the wholesale trade markets
- How about providing a plant guarantee?

"One other thing growers could do is if they have a good line of plants is to make sure they have a lot of them." Kerry Bradley from Back Gardening.

Nursery Papers

June 2004 Issue no. 5

Gavin Opie – Go Gardening, Sydney

Also in Sydney, Gavin Opie from Go Gardening previously used the wholesale trade markets, but not any more. Gavin now buys direct from a grower who also operates as a broker for the plant lines he doesn't grow or have ready for sale.

"I used to be the eyes and ears for buying plants, but it was taking too much time. So now I pay a grower, someone who knows plants, to provide most of my stock for me. If he hasn't got it, he sources it for me and arranges delivery usually direct to the site," says Gavin.

Gavin believes delivery needs to be flexible. "I don't like storing plants on site as security and plant maintenance is a problem. Also, if it is a building site, there are likely to be lots of other trades people there and if the plants are in their way, they will get damaged."

Asked whether a web based wholesale trade plant market would work, Gavin believes yes if the logistics were right. "Being able to deliver the actual plants depicted on the website, not lower grade substitutes, when required would be crucial".



Tips for producers

- Consider sourcing plants as well as growing
- Be flexible with delivery
- Don't fill orders with lower grade plants

For Gavin Opie from Go Gardening, size of the plant is more important than presentation and labelling. "I am after healthy and robust growing plants that have a full root system, good colour and size."

David Franklin – Exquisite Gardens Australia, Victoria

David Franklin believes production nurseries need to be more accessible because they are often located a great distance from where the landscaping is occurring.

David uses a combination of wholesale trade markets as well as buying direct from growers, both within the state and interstate. "There are some plants, like palms, that just grow better north of Victoria. So for big orders I often buy direct and have them shipped down."

Healthy stock, and lots of it, is what David wants. "Plants need to have a full sized root ball and a dense canopy. Ultimately my clients decide on how well the plants look, and I want to impress them!"



Tips for producers

- Ensure a good sized root ball
- Be prepared to deliver interstate
- Ensure a dense canopy

Darwin Plant Wholesalers can organise the delivery of large landscape trees throughout Australia.

Nursery Papers

June 2004 Issue no. 5

Colin Groom – Domus Nursery, Western Australia

Domus Nursery currently supplies plants to the landscaping sector. But according to Colin Groom, they would like to supply more.

“We sell direct to landscapers and councils and supply the wholesale trade markets,” said Colin. “If we grow large quantities for landscapers, we can use less decorative and therefore cheaper pots.”

Domus Nursery has sponsored awards within the landscape industry to help raise their profile with landscapers. “We have also thought about improving our current ‘fax only’ relationship with landscapers by having more direct communications. This could help landscapers become more loyal customers and increase forward orders.”

Tips from a producer

- You can use less decorative pots
- Consider sponsoring landscape events
- Encourage landscapers to forward order



Domus Nursery in WA works with TAFE colleges to improve their profile and to help ensure students are aware of what plants are currently grown commercially.

Peter Wilkins – TGA Australia, Victoria

There are of course many growers already successfully servicing the landscaping sector. Peter Wilkins from TGA Australia supplies wholesale trade markets and individual plant brokers as well as dealing direct with landscapers.

“Often we are asked for a description over the phone,” said Peter. “We give an accurate description including height, width, calliper, density of canopy and fullness. And we ensure we deliver to that description.”

“Good communication regarding delivery is essential. We always ring about one hour prior to delivery to ensure the landscaper is on site. We want to take away as many barriers as we can for our landscape customers.”

TGA do not differentiate plant quality or overall price between the retail or landscape markets, however some landscapers request fewer labels. Peter says the only real disadvantage in dealing

with landscapers is that delays can occur for accepting stock due to onsite building setbacks. This can mean carrying stock for longer.

Peter believes landscapers have a very difficult role in the industry. They do a lot of work including design, construction, planting, ensuring client satisfaction and then hopefully they get paid. “They are an important part of our industry and as such they need top service from us. The ‘do it for me’ market is growing and we need to work together. Think win-win.”

Tips from a producer

- Provide accurate stock descriptions
- Be prepared to hold stock
- Think win-win



“One of the advantages of servicing both retail and landscape markets is when one is flat, the other may still be buoyant and therefore evens out your sales.” Peter Wilkins from TGA Australia.

Nursery Papers

June 2004 Issue no. 5

Garry Heyne – Heyne's Wholesale Nursery, South Australia

Heyne's Wholesale Nursery is in the record books as Australia's oldest nursery business, starting in 1869. Fourth generation manager, Garry Heyne, specifically targets the landscaper market.

"There are a number of things we do to attract and maintain landscaper customers," claimed Garry. These include:

- Growing plants in and out of season. Landscapers prefer plants in flower but also want them all year round.
- Plants need to look good and be grown under hard conditions so they stand up well when planted.
- Having a weed free environment. You can't just remove weeds from the pot as it goes out the door because the weeds will grow back and the landscaper will get a bad name.
- Having a large range of plants and in different sizes.
- Providing reliable and timely transport to the site. Trucks are loaded the night before as landscapers do not want delivery late in the day.
- Encourage landscaper visits. We supply a fleet of golf buggies so landscapers

can drive themselves around and we encourage them to bring their clients with them. We also have coffee facilities available.

- Laying out the nursery so that all plants are easily accessible with informative signposts and labels. This means landscapers can find their own way around.
- Having knowledgeable staff to back up the plants we sell. If a landscaper needs additional information, for example, whether it is suited to limestone country, we need to have the answers.
- Develop respect and integrity with the landscapers. If they ask for a particular plant that they may have seen on television, but we know it won't grow here, we tell them so.

Tips from a producer

- Grow and supply plants throughout the year
- Ensure plants are hardy
- Know the characteristics of your plants

Todd McCorkell – Structure Scapes, Queensland

Todd McCorkell also sources his plants direct through a wholesale nursery. The nursery will source plants even if they don't have them and delivery is always made direct to the work site. This lowers overall delivery costs.

Todd's advice to growers is that they need to be competitive, prepared to source stock if they haven't got it, provide consistent good quality and be on time with deliveries.

Todd also said that as landscape contractors are now becoming accredited, sourcing stock from nurseries accredited under the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) helps to complete the professional service.

Tips for producers

- Become NIASA accredited
- Ensure consistent high quality
- Deliver on time



Acknowledgements

This *Nursery Paper* was researched and written by Richard Stephens from Yellow House Consulting. Thanks to the producers and landscapers who gave up their time and knowledge.

Garry Heyne from Heyne's Wholesale Nursery believes we need to develop trust with the landscapers. "If there is a dollar in it for them then there is a dollar in it for us. If we give them the tools, we will all be winners!"