



International Plant Propagators' Society Australian Region - Newsletter Summer 2008 - No: 20

CHANGING TIMES !

A point made at a recent NGINA seminar led by John Stanley was that it is "Very important for a plant breeder and propagator to understand retailer and consumer needs". With the current sentiment of the times this is an excellent opportunity for us to consider some of the issues raised. Especially as we are now propagating plants to be retailed in two or three years time.

At the seminar we were challenged to think about what we would (1) keep doing (2) stop doing and (3) change. We know from newspapers that sales of pharmaceuticals, music and supermarket goods are up. Down are sales of big ticket items such as furniture, plasma TVs, cars and overseas holidays. Consumers lack confidence in the future and it is harder now to borrow money.

Local industry reports suggest that in 2008 sales of food plants (herbs, seedlings, fruit trees) were up. Is that what you are propagating? From US research it was reported that 86% of Americans want green sustainable gardens, but only 3% said the industry was providing the information to do it. How do we measure up?

Women are the major buyers of food and plants in pots, and generation X/Y (40% of the population now) are the key plant buyers. Mostly baby-boomers have established gardens and are only looking to top up. How well do babyboomers (who operate most nurseries) understand the different needs of this important group of people. We have a tremendous resource in IPPS through our younger members to change what we are doing. Are

we researching future fashion trends and colours now to anticipate consumer demand for 2011?

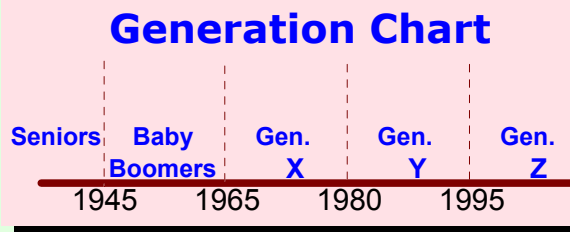
With more time at home, gardening is expected to be in vogue. Proportionately more Australians are renting now, and new dwellings have smaller garden areas so the type of plants required in gardens is different to the past. More people are turning to the internet for plant information for their weekend garden project, not books or the local nursery.

As well as a more sophisticated offering, expectations are that people will demand more environmentally friendly recycled products (pots, media, water) in the next three years. We need to find ways to promote our professionalism; to growers, retailers and consumers.

We continue to live through water restrictions with smarter irrigation practice. Other changes are happening. For example it appears that Energy companies will purchase pine bark suppliers for green credits, leading to significant media cost increases. Who is investigating the next generation of soilless media?

The Australian region of IPPS is well placed to adapt to these changing times with 3 passionate generation X/Y and 5 women on the executive team. In our own workplaces we need to take the time to find out what things we could be doing differently too, by working with the people alongside us.

Bruce Higgs



THIS EDITION
Changing Times!
Getting in touch with new thinking.
Changes in Irrigation Practice
2008 Update

Profile - Mim Wright
Tasmanian Pre-Conference
tour May 2009
Reports
• President's Comment

• Executive Officer's Comment
• South African Exchange 2009
Challenge
Coming Events, News, letters
Newsletter Editors Comment

President's Comment

The current economic climate certainly requires most businesses to reflect on their future viability and the Nursery Industry is no exception. Whilst traditionally when times are tough, many families tend to stay at home, restricting expenditure on outings to restaurants, take away food and other luxuries; they also tend to spend more time in their gardens. This is a possible bright spot for us as we move into a period of consumer restraint and an area we need to exploit.



Recently, I have had the opportunity to visit China and spent four days at a forum in Hongzhou province, a large rural area four hours south of Shanghai in the Yangtze delta. The purpose of the forum was to enable nurseries in that area to listen to a group of nursery, cut flower and seed company people from around the world. We talked about the opportunities for Chinese nurseries to lift the level of their technical expertise with an eye to increasing both domestic and export sales.

This gave us the opportunity to look at a number of nursery operations, many of which were still using rudimentary infrastructure and production practices. But it soon became apparent that there is a real desire by those people to bring themselves, as quickly as possible, up to world best practice.

What was particularly interesting was the way these nurseries have started to devote a lot of time, collectively, on marketing their product. Which necessarily places a focus on productivity, quality and transport as well as where there may be new markets. With increasing per capita income in China there is an interest being shown by consumers in ornamentals and cut flowers, which has not been prevalent before.

I use this example to demonstrate the need for us to work together to ensure that we tap into new markets that are being created, sometimes from adversity, such as economic downturns and climatic conditions. It is also I believe, a call for us as propagators to look at new ways of producing plant material in nurseries that are more efficient and have a focus on quality.

In our own nursery we strive to produce quality plant material, on time and in the numbers that are ordered. Using these criteria we have been able to retain our best customers and set benchmarks that attract new customers.

The Australian region of IPPS continues to plan for next years joint conference with New Zealand to be held in Hobart preceded by what looks to be a really exciting pre conference tour. Rose and Tony Vander-Staay are doing a terrific job of organisation along with

their New Zealand counterparts; it will be a conference not to be missed.

We are also working on next years exchange program and Greg McPhee has rekindled the interest that was earlier shown between our own region and that of the USA Southern Region. Such an exchange would compliment the one we already have in place with South Africa. We are looking at expanding the age cut off for the USA exchange. Hopefully we may know more about this at the Hobart conference.

Once again my thanks to all of the committee and Pam Berryman, for giving time to the Society, my special thanks go to Bruce Higgs for his excellent work with the Propagator newsletter.

David Cliffe

Executive Officer's Comment

IPPS OFFICE

I have been kept busy tending to 'every day' administration tasks.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Australian Region of IPPS has 256 Members.

There have been 6 new members join since August and these are:

Mr. Daniel Austin – TAFE – SA

Mr. Stephen Bartlett – Royal Botanic Gardens – NSW

Mr. Adam Dehnen – Big Leaf Wholesale Nurseries – QLD

Mrs. Susan Gibbons – Isidore Grain – TASMANIA

Mr. Bruce Montgomery – Jane Brook Nursery – WA

Mr. Marcus Ragus – TAFE – TASMANIA

FINANCIAL

As at 31st October 2008 Bank Balance in Cheque Account was: \$58 905.35 (\$620.45 belongs to Editors Account)

Term Deposit – \$10,000 matured November'08 and was reinvested at 6.78% pa. Next maturity date is 25.12.2009

AGED RECEIVABLES

Aged Receivables as at 31.10.08 is NIL

BAS STATEMENT

BAS Statement for the July to September period was lodged – Payment of \$485.00.

On a personal note I have reverted back to the name of Berryman due to marriage breakdown.

- Pam Berryman



GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PROPAGATOR

IPPS SOUTH AFRICAN EXCHANGE 2009

For the opportunity of a lifetime, it is time to apply for the fourth South African Exchange Program.

This was established by Australian IPPS and South Africa IPPS to give young propagators, at the start of their career, the opportunity to gain experience of each others industry and to build a better understanding of each country.

In July/August 2009 the young propagator chosen will spend approximately 3 weeks in South Africa, hosted by local Nurserymen, where he/she will work and visit other nurseries and places of interest in South Africa, including tourist venues, plus attend their IPPS Conference.

The program as usual is sponsored by Australia and South Africa IPPS, but will be later in the year, because South Africa's Conference is held in August. After the trip the chosen propagator will be expected to attend the Australian IPPS Conference in April/May 2010 to talk about his/her wonderful experience.

Now that you are thinking about this experience or you know someone who may be suitable, check the following to make sure of eligibility:-

- You must be over the age of 18 years and just starting your career of propagating and growing plants.
- You must be able to travel to South Africa in July/Aug 2009 and attend our May Conference in 2010.
- Your employer must support this application and your time off work.
- You must be prepared to make notes and take photographs of your great experience and report back to Australian IPPS Conference in 2010.

If all of the above suits you and you would like to be hosted (at no cost to you, except spending money) in South Africa to gain great knowledge, experience the lifestyle and great sights of South Africa. Then tell us about your background in Horticulture, including training and work experience and send the application form which is available on the IPPS website www.ipps.org.au by March 2009.

Still not sure, then read our last Exchange Propagator, Nathan Sparkes, comments in this edition of "The Propagator", or speak to any of the three previous people to help you decide to take the opportunity of being an ambassador for Australian IPPS.

David Ponman

IPPS Exchange Program 2009

Yes it's that time again!

IPPS Australia and IPPS South Africa have established an exchange program for propagators (young or old) at the start of their horticultural career to develop a better understanding of each other's industry.

This exchange program is a great opportunity not only to see another country and experience a different culture, but offers a great potential to develop relationships with people on the other side of the world. This exchange may help to shape your horticultural career, and possibly even take you to places you never would have thought.

This years' exchange definitely opened my eyes up to the world. I developed relationships with people who I still keep in contact with and it gave me a great insight into a horticultural industry with far less monetary resources than our own. So if you are a keen propagator and this exchange program appeals to you, get your applications in as soon as possible before you miss out!

Nathan Sparkes

2008 South Africa Exchange Winner

Nursery irrigation management – improvements can be made

As an industry, nurseries are dependent upon reliable access to water of suitable quality and quantity. In recent years we have been significantly impacted by climate change, drought, water restrictions, water recycling, desalination, prescribed environmental flows and the plethora of water legislation which govern our allocation/entitlements to securing water for our needs.



Examples of the old and new irrigation sprinklers in use



Aquaspy in foreground and ECH2O in background used to assess moisture content within rootzone environments to allow irrigation scheduling



Soil moisture sensors - Blue is Aquaspy and green is the ECH2O

The focus on water use efficiencies has become more stringent and there is a call for all industries to be accountable for their water use, however the finger has definitely been pointed to the irrigation industries and outdoor water use.

Although a number of innovative products (by example wastewater reuse, irrigation tools utilising high-end information technology and high efficiency irrigation sprinklers and emitters) are currently available, they are yet to be widely incorporated by the nursery and garden industry. Their potential to substantially increase water use efficiency is generally not the impediment but the lack of information to confirm the productivity and profitability returned on the outlay of the changes by reducing input costs in areas such as water and fertilisers usage and improved crop culture to provide a return on the investment.

In many cases low adoption of technology has been due to a lack of specific cost/benefit data and a lack of independent verification of claims made by equipment suppliers. Up until recently, the evidence of product efficacy has been anecdotal or based on insufficient scientific analysis which has usually been commissioned by the manufacturer or marketer which further adds to the reluctance of producers to invest in them.

To assist nurseries in adopting the wide range of technology available to them, the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) commissioned research to increase the adoption of innovative irrigation technology across industry. In response to the research, 3 Nursery Papers have been produced to provide information relating to:

- Irrigation scheduling and use of soil moisture sensors
- Retrofitting an irrigation system
- Establishing the return on investment to modifying the irrigation system and management within a nursery

Information is now available for industry to assess their existing situation and plan for changes in water use efficiency to assess the return and the benefits to the businesses.

In many cases it is not the product or technology which achieves the savings but the management of the system.



In addition to the technical references now available there is the NGIA Waterwork training workshop which provides valuable information in water use efficiency for a business. For more information on this course go to the NGIA website – www.ngia.com.au or contact your NGI state/territory Industry Development Officer.

- Michael Danelon

Photos supplied from David Hunt of the Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries

References:

Nursery Industry Water Management Best Practice Guidelines (updated 2005) available to download from NGIA website

Managing Water in Plant Nurseries (2nd edition) available to purchase from NGIA website www.ngia.com.au

Nursery Papers May 2006 Issue no. 4, How efficient is your business water management

Nursery Paper August 2006 Issue no. 8, Scheduling irrigation to maximise efficiency

Nursery Paper January 2007 Issue no. 1, Water use in the nursery and garden industry

Nursery Paper November 2008 Issue no. 8, Do soil moisture sensors have a role in containerised nursery production

Nursery Paper November 2008 Issue no. 9, Upgrading an irrigation system can improve water uniformity and reduce your operating expenses

Nursery Paper November 2008 Issue no. 10, A generic economic decision model for the nursery industry to assess proposed changes to a business

PROFILE - Mim Wright

Mim teaches at Swinburne TAFE (University of Technology) in the Department of Horticulture & Environment, and is a member the Australian region of IPPS executive team. Many of us were fascinated with her report on the 2007 U.S. Study tour at this years conference.

It is great to see the enthusiasm of members regardless of age. The purpose of profiles is to make it easier for newer members to ask questions of people they can identify. So here are Mim's responses to my questions. I continue to be impressed by the diversity of answers as to what IPPS means to our membership.



What are the things that you feel have created or made your standing in the industry? Why did you choose this career and what are the values that you hold to?

"I didn't choose this career, it just kind of happened. I grew up working in the garden with my grandmother, climbing trees, bushwalking and generally being taught to wonder and marvel at the beauty and complexity of nature. Looking thought the VTAC guide at the end of year 12, I saw Horticulture at Burnley and it just clicked, that was what I was going to study. I've just followed my nose from there, and ended up teaching, I think by chance and I love it. I still work with plants but am also constantly challenged and entertained by the amazing people I meet on a daily basis. I love plants and plants people, and in TAFE I get a good dose of both.

Since finishing my BASH Hort at Burnley, I've also done a Grad Dip in Industrial Education and am back at Uni this year studying Sustainability. I've probability learnt more over the years from talking to people and sharing ideas with students, colleagues, and people in industry, but I also think a lot of what makes a good horticulturist is instinct."

What do you feel you have to share with others regarding "the world of propagation".

"In every group of students there is at least one student who really gets it, they are really fascinated about plants and have a real knack with them. It doesn't matter whether they are Next Gen, Y Gen, X Gen, or baby boomers these people all "get" each other and have something really special in common. I've never felt out of place or uncomfortable when I'm with a group of plant people. I love seeing young people like the six packers finding that there's a whole society of crazy plants people out there just like them. I always tell my students about IPPS and encourage them to go to events and get involved, most are reluctant but there

has been a few Swinburne Alumni at each of the IPPS conferences.

Perhaps this is the youth angle, understanding where people are coming from: emotion, care for the environment, weekend or short term projects rather than long term goals, appeal of sophisticated images, use of the web for information and other cool stuff.

Young people have a lot to offer IPPS, they are highly IT literate, and some are highly motivated and driven, others not so, most are a bit impatient. Technology has provided us with huge amounts of information at our finger tips, but changed how we value knowledge. We communicate differ-

ently, and operate comfortably in a fast paced technology driven world.

However, the X and Y generation who get involved with IPPS are not so different from you oldies, and my guess is that one of the things they most want to get out of IPPS is the opportunity to meet and chat to people with the huge knowledge and experience you can only get from years in the industry, and that you cant find on Google.

What they want in return is to be recognised for the value they have for bringing new ideas, creative thinking and new practice to the old tried and true traditions."

Finally what are the significant things that you have personally gained through IPPS membership?

"I've had some fantastic adventures with IPPS but probably the biggest thing I've gained is Friendship... My first experience with IPPS was in Mildura as one of the Six Pack. I was amazed by how openly I was welcomed, involved, questioned. I met heaps of people and spoke to fascinating people from all over Australia. It was the same in America on the IPPS International Tour I went on last year. It's just a really fantastic group of people.

Before IPPS I'd been reluctant to go to any industry functions, because I wouldn't know any one and I'd stand in the room looking uncomfortable avoiding eye contact. After Mildura I felt much more part of the industry, and happy to go to any event, because I new I'd likely run into someone I knew. That's meant I'm always learning, because I'm involved and feel welcome. I think it is vital for educators to be involved; the industry is constantly changing and we need to keep up."

Bruce Higgs

IPPS Pre-conference tour of Tasmania May 09

Pre-conference tours not only offer the opportunity to visit growers and nurseries but provide an experience of sharing ideas and the journey with like minded people. Not to mention some great scenery. The itinerary for next years Tasmanian adventure is:

Wednesday 6th May: arrival and a welcome drink, accomm. Wrest Point Hotel.

Thursday 7th May: Depart Wrest Point hotel and travel via New Norfolk, Bushy Park to Russell Falls in the Mount Field National Park. We then move on to Tarraleah for lunch, (own account) and then arrive at "The Wall in the Wilderness" A work in progress, The Wall is being carved from three metre high wooden panels. The panels will tell the history of the harsh central Highlands region – beginning with the indigenous people, then to the pioneering timber harvesters, pastoralists, miners and Hydro workers. Continuing our journey via lake St Clair and Queenstown with its unique barren landscape, we arrive in Strahan. Accom: Strahan Village.



Friday 8th May: After a full buffet breakfast we board the Gordon River Cruise vessel for a scenic cruise along the Gordon River (home of the Huon Pine) with a stop at Sarah Island. Lunch is provided on board. The cruise concludes at 2.30 pm. and you have time to explore the sawmill and the dock area before seeing the play 'The Ship That Never Was'. Accom: Strahan village.



Saturday 9th May: After breakfast we head for the Strahan Railway Station to board the Westcoast Wilderness Railway for the journey through time along 35 km track, stopping at stations of the past as you venture through impressive scenery (lunch included). On arrival in Queenstown board the bus and drive via Zeehan, Rosebery and Tullah to Cradle Mountain. Accom: Cradle Mountain Chateau.

Sunday 10th: After breakfast, we drive into the Cradle valley to Cradle Mountain, looming above Dove Lake. Develop an understanding of glacial lakes and deep rugged gorges on the Cradle explorer guided tour. See unique alpine plants and animals, visit the Tasmanian



Devil park, and enjoy the rest of the day exploring the cradle region.

Monday 11th May: After a full buffet breakfast we head to Sheffield, visiting Todd Miles - Clematis Cottage nursery, then onto Gunns forestry Nursery at Somerset, back tracking to the Emu valley gardens for Lunch. The gardens have a very extensive range of Rhododendrons, plus trees. From here we go to Anvers Chocolate factory, on our way to Tamar Valley Roses (Tasmania's premier rose grower), overnight at Launceston Country Club Villas.

Tuesday 12th May: After breakfast we head for Allans production Nursery in Youngtown, from which we depart for Scottsdale and visit Woodlea tree production nursery. From Scottsdale we head for the sunny east coast and the towns of Bicheno, St Helens and Scamander. Our journey resumes, making a stop at Elephant Pass Pancakes on our way to Coles Bay. Overnight Freycinet Lodge.

Wednesday 13th May: After breakfast we have arranged a guided tour, to see the Wineglass Bay Lookout (1½ -2 hours 1.3 km). A steady climb on an easy grade track rewards the walker at every turn. Imposing granite mountains, elevated bay views and boulderfields give a taste of the destination - the classic view of Wineglass Bay from the lookout.

From here we travel to Swansea for lunch at the Bark Mill. After lunch head for Hobart stopping at Pulchella nursery at Buckland (specializing in Tas. Native flora). Then onto Hobart and Wrest Point Hotel.

What will the weather be like!

Generally this time of year brings cool nights and clear days, but be prepared for possible rainy periods, especially on the West coast of Tasmania.

This tour is designed to give you an overall picture of our island, please come and enjoy.

Please Note: this tour may have some additions or deletions as we firm up our numbers.



Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake

Payment: \$400 deposit per person to be paid on booking balance by the 1st April 09.

Refunds 100% upto 28th Feb, 50% to the 1st April, no refund after 1st April 09.

Costs have been set at AU\$1710.00 per person twin share and \$2425.00 single.

Lunches will be your own cost except where stated.

Tour bookings will not be accepted after the 28th February 2009.

Tour includes:

Eight nights Accomodation Federal group, bus hire including driver, tickets to “The Ship That Never Was”, Cradle Mountain explorer tour, Emu Valley gardens, the Freycinet experience.

Other Tours

Possible Thursday short tour (subject to numbers): Huon Valley Tour (south of Hobart), Mt. Nelson, Fork In the Road garden Centre (retail), Apple Museum, Homehill winery (Lunch), Stonehouse Gardens, Cost : to be advised

Saturday (Conference tours)

Salamanca Market- Tibballs nursery- Granton Plants, - Newtown Station Nursery (retail), Plants of Tasmania, Jubilee nursery, Growmaster, Nic Cracknell, Westland Nurseries, Royal Botanical Gardens, ?? all subject to change.

Proposed Monday Tour: (subject to numbers)

The Bruny Island Experience: National Parks, Hiba gardens, Bruny Island tour (boat)

Challenge

While writing my copy for the Australian Horticulture magazine December 2008 edition I was made aware of a technology being used extensively in Europe and the UK. Compost Tea was mentioned by my overseas correspondent, so I did a bit of research on the net and

Registration for the Pre-conference tour of Tasmania in May 2009

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER _____

Special Dietary requirements: _____

Payment Method:

Enclosed is payment of: \$ _____

by Cheque /Mastercard/Visa

Credit card Number: _____
expiry ____/____

Cardholder name: _____

Signature _____

Please copy/detach, complete and forward to Australian Region of the IPPS 27 Petunia Crescent, Mt. Cotton. Qld. 4165

Or email Pam Berryman at pjberry@iprimus.com.au

Any questions address to Tony VanderStaay, on tvanders@bigpond.com

also found some papers on the subject in vol. 56 of the Combined Proceedings. Of particular interest was the paper by John Summers on page 221 which discusses the use of compost tea in cutting propagation.

So here is my challenge for this edition.

Have a look at the article in the Proceedings, do a bit of research on Compost Tea and trial the process to see if it has any benefits in your cutting production.

I do, of course, expect that the research will be written up and presented at a future IPPS Conference. To get you started you might like to have a look at this website www.soilfoodweb.com.au.

- Michael Gleeson

VALE DAVID NICHOLS

It is with great regret that I write this tribute to the horticultural abilities of David Nichols who died soon after the IPPS Conference in Victoria at which he presented another paper on aspects of growing media and nutrition for the nursery industry.



David was educated in horticulture at Gatton College in Queensland and graduated with a Degree in Horticultural Technology. This is the institution within which I had a thirty year career teaching horticulture, although David graduated before I started at Gatton. However, I got to know David very well and during my early years at Gatton I coordinated a series of Nursery Refresher Courses. David was a regular speaker at these courses and he was always very well received by participants through his sharing of knowledge.

David became a regular speaker at national conferences for the nursery industry and for many years he wrote regular articles on growing media and nutrition for Australian Horticulture. In writing these articles he never shirked the hard questions asked of him and he demonstrated that he had an enormous knowledge on all aspects of growing media and nutrition.

David became a member of IPPS in 2002 at the Melbourne conference organised by David Daly. However, for the whole of David's career in the horticultural industry he clearly demonstrated the principles of IPPS in relation to sharing of knowledge and I was delighted when he chose to become a member.

The Society and the horticultural industry of Australia regret the passing of David Nichols in the knowledge that we have lost one of the great communicators and sharers of knowledge within the industry in Australia.

Ian Gordon Editor, Australian Region IPPS

Coming Events and News

Joint Australian and New Zealand Conference 2009
Hobart MAY 11th - 17th, 2009.

The latest Plant Varieties Journal has been published and posted to the IP Australia website at :
http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/pbr/journal_download.shtml

Letter to the editor:

I have been reading with some interest and concern your article in the Spring 2008 edition about the loss of our seed collecting fraternity. I was surprised to learn that most of them are now well over seventy years old and that there are very few of the younger generation

willing to follow them into the future. Also of concern are the restrictions now in place making it difficult to harvest seed from state forests etc. Like you I can see this as "a threat to the continuity of supply of seed, especially affecting cut flower growers and ornamental horticulture".

I believe this issue should be taken up by our industry as a matter of some urgency.

Michael Gleeson

Newsletter Editors Comment

I have already started researching some of the issues raised in the course of preparing this newsletter for future editions. We can look forward to the Autumn edition focussing on our joint conference in Hobart.

Don't forget that this newsletter and some past copies are also available on the IPPS website at www.ipps.org.au, and pass your extra copy of the newsletter around at work.

Bruce Higgs - editor "the Propagator" (02) 4736 5004
bruce.higgs@bigpond.com

Merchandise Available!



Polo shirts

Traditional green with white trim, embroidered with the IPPS logo. (In sizes S/M/L/XL/XXL)
Members price **\$25.00**
Non-members **\$30.00**



Caps

Traditional green with white trim, embroidered with the IPPS logo. (One size fits all)
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Large 9 cm diameter sew-on badge. White, green, gold and black. Suitable for hats, vests, jackets etc. **\$10.00**



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