

NGIA CLIPPINGS

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This month's Nursery Paper... Supporting and Advancing Australian Plant Breeding

Australian plant breeders have developed many improved native trees and shrubs that are widely sold in Australia and planted in gardens. A small number of companies are exporting the intellectual property of innovative native plants suitable for seasonal potted colour and bedding to overseas markets and reversing the traditional flow of royalties. A few have had international success with exotics such as proteas, petunias and Madeira daisies. Other organisations are hoping for international sales. While there are some great success stories, the breeders and marketers we surveyed signposted numerous difficulties in breeding and marketing new plants. In this Nursery Paper, the second of a two-part series on plant breeding, horticultural writer Helen Moody examines a number of issues that could be addressed to give greater support to Australian plant breeding.

It's a dream come true for Flemings Student Design Comp winner

Spaniard Alicia Ferrer says she found it hard to believe when she was told she had won the Flemings Student Design Competition. "There were so many emotions; this is something I had dreamt about."

The competition, which is in its tenth year, is a key component of the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS) and offers students of horticulture and design a wonderful opportunity to showcase their design talents, explore new ideas, push design boundaries and gain valuable experience within the industry.

Alicia's garden, 'Urban Cage', was designed for a residence in an inner-city area with limited outdoor space. With the only colours being green and white, the garden is simple, according to Alicia, so people who are usually surrounded by the busy rush of the city can relax without too many elements around them. "It is a sanctuary for the senses," she says.

Formerly an interior designer, Alicia says she felt she could no longer move forward in her work and was restless. Realising her passion for

plants and gardens, she stopped working as an interior designer and instead studied landscape design and horticulture.

She says her interior and landscape design skills complement one another. "The two skills together give me a better understanding of the concepts of design. I have chosen to focus on landscape design because it is more romantic, I am passionate about plants."

Alicia, who is married to an Australian, says landscape design is very different here than it is in Spain. "Here most people have gardens, whereas in Europe it is only the rich, or those in rural areas, the rest are high-rises. Here people live horizontally, whereas in Europe they live vertically."

Alicia launched her landscape design company, Kokatu Design at the beginning of the year and her new business has been helped along enormously by the media exposure her win has received. Alicia was awarded \$5000 in prize money which she intends to spend on a website and the general promotion of her business.



Winner of the 2009 Flemings Student Design Competition, Alicia Ferrer with her design 'Urban Cage'.



The winning design, 'Urban Cage'.

Nursery & garden industry fights invasion

The nursery and garden industry is proud to announce the release of its Grow Me Instead booklets, launched in Melbourne on April 1 in conjunction with the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIGFS).

In championing this initiative, Nursery & Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) is taking a significant step forward in tackling one of the nation's most serious environmental problems – the spread of environmental weeds.

These booklets, as part of the Grow Me Instead program, contain lists of plants which were formerly grown and sold to gardeners and have since 'jumped the garden fence' and become invasive in the natural environment. The lists were developed by NGIA in partnership with the Department of Primary Industry, the Catchment Management Authorities, local government, and various other environmental weed agencies.

The aim of the booklets and the Grow Me Instead program as a whole is to educate gardeners to recognise and remove the plants listed and replace them with superior, suitable alternatives.

This important step in preventing the spread of environmental weeds is a vital public education program. By selecting plants carefully, using these lists for guidance and encouraging others to do the same, you will be significantly helping the environment.

Dr Anthony Kachenko, NGIA Environmental and Technical Policy Manager, says the Grow Me Instead initiative will ensure industry remains proactive in discouraging the promotion of invasive species across whole of industry.

"This educational resource, which has been developed in collaboration with the Federal Government, will foster effective communication links between producers and consumers to raise awareness of invasive plant issues and how to effectively manage these undesirable species."

It is estimated the spread of weeds costs the Australian agricultural industry around \$4 billion a year. The real cost of weeds to the environment is difficult to calculate, however it is likely to be at least equal to that of the cost for agriculture.

"It is imperative that industry continues to nurture close ties with external stakeholders

to minimise the threat of invasive plants and protect the natural environment for future generations," Dr Kachenko continues.

To obtain copies of Grow Me Instead booklets for New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, or Northern Territory contact your state Nursery & Garden Industry Association.

The Grow Me Instead booklets for Queensland are currently under development and will be released later in the year.



Life is a garden centre at the Royal Easter Show

Nursery & Garden Industry NSW & ACT (NGINA) is celebrating after the success of their display garden exhibit at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April. Not only did the display get a high amount of foot traffic and interest at the show, it also won 'Best Outdoor Display' in the Flower & Garden Exhibition.

The "Life is a garden centre" stand which was project managed by Peter Whitehead, featured over 1500 plants, a resting area with tables and chairs, and a children's colouring-in competition. The aim of the display was to drive people into garden centres.

"Our focus was to promote garden centres and showcase the professionalism of the industry," Peter says.

The display took months to plan and three full days to set-up. With so many plants it also had a high dollar value. However, NGINA was fortunate enough to have a lot of help from its members with the donation of plants, prizes for the colouring-in competition, the lending of a gazebo, as well as the help of 50 volunteers throughout the two weeks of the show. All

volunteers are able to claim CNP points for their attendance on the stand.

"The NGINA Board of Directors decided exhibiting at the Royal Easter Show was a great opportunity for a large amount of public exposure," Peter says. He believes that more than 10,000 people went through the Life is a garden centre stand.

Peter hopes to expand on the Life is a garden centre campaign and use the slogan for other promotional opportunities. "After all, life really is a garden centre," he says.



The Life is a garden centre display had a resting area with seats and tables.



NGINA CEO Mike Skegg, NGINA Life Member and retired Royal Easter Show Councilor Ben Swane, NGINA President Mike Mehigan.



A new release in the display is Fuchsia ELECTRIC LIGHTS from Glenfields Wholesale.

From the CEO's desk... Nursery industry shows off to consumers

Our industry is really promoting itself to consumers with major events such as the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS) in Melbourne, the Royal Easter Show in Sydney and Garden Week in Perth all providing the opportunities for new products and the professionalism of our industry to gain exposure from consumers.

The NGIA Board met in Melbourne to coincide with MIFGS and the Directors attended this brilliant event – some had never been before and were astounded at its size and scope.

I have been fortunate enough to attend several MIFGS events over the years and can say that the 2009 event has lifted the bar. It was brilliant and the NGIV team and all others associated with it should be congratulated. The featured show gardens were amazing, the Fleming's student Design Competition gardens and the display gardens from LIAV were inspirational. The Avenue of Achievable Gardens which are built by horticultural students from the various educational organisations were well patronised as members of the public gained ideas on how to create a garden room.

The key component in all these displays was great plants and the growers who were aligned with the event should be very proud of the product on display - when we

consider the climatic conditions experienced in Victoria over the past few months it adds to the achievement. A great event and one which all industry stakeholders should make a point of visiting in the future.

The Royal Easter Show is the premium event for Agriculture/Horticulture and this year featured a large display from NGINA under the banner "Life is a garden centre". This promoted key products and information to consumers who were then directed back to industry retailers. This won the Best Outdoor Display Award. Congratulations to the NGINA Team.

Not to be outdone by activities on the East Coast, growers and consumers in Perth were engaged with Garden Week through mid April. I am told that plant quality was high and I am sure many consumers were inspired by what was on display.

The industry will be looking to capitalise and build on this exposure with consumers. The trends are for increased sales activity as people "cocoon" or invest in a "staycation", so let us ensure we secure the greatest value for our products – we do not need to discount as autumn is the time to plant.

Robert Prince
NGIA CEO

President's Comment

The nursery and garden industry has tracked through the first part of the recession quite well according to reports. People spend more time around their homes during tough economic times. It has been a time to claw back some of the market share lost in the preceding economic boom.

The challenge for everyone involved in industry leadership is to ensure the necessary research, technical, business and training skills are provided to whole of industry to prepare our people for the opportunities of now and into the future.

A current issue for the industry is the movement of seeds and plant material interstate, which is becoming more and more problematic. South Australia has lead the way, with the State Government legislating that only NIASA accredited nurseries can move plants into South Australia. This is a tremendous endorsement of the industry accreditation scheme and will see a rapid acceleration of the call for association services to conduct more accreditation audits.

On another note, the recent Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS) bears testament to the fact that Victorian gardeners are very resilient to the water situation confronting the state. It was a very successful show with magnificent displays, many of which showed what you really can do with a small garden area.

Now is the time to be innovative and creative and capitalise on the opportunities that await. Continue to strive to deliver improvements, to analyse, rationalise and above all work hard so that collectively, we ensure the nursery industry maintains market share.



Geoff Richards
NGIA President

New rural training package – Industry feedback required

After a number of years of discussion and feedback, AgriFood Skills Australia has reached a major stage in the merger process for the three rural industry training packages: Rural Production (RTE03), Amenity Horticulture (RTF03) and Conservation and Land Management (RTD03). These training packages are being merged into a single Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package (AHC09).

AgriFood Skills has loaded the AHC09 Training Package onto their website www.agrifoodskills.net.au and are asking for final feedback. It is important to the industry that the training package contains relevant content for our needs, and therefore we ask that you take a look at what has been

posted on the site and tell them your thoughts. Feedback has been invited via their Continuous Improvement Register (located on their website).

The AHC training package qualifications and competency standards, and the associated documents, will be available for feedback UNTIL MAY 18, 2009. Your feedback will be considered by AgriFood Skills at the completion of the validation period and appropriate adjustments should be incorporated.

If you would like further information or wish to discuss this topic further, please contact Fiona Kelly, National Training & Recognition Manager, NGIA on (02) 9876 5200 or Fiona.kelly@ngia.com.au

Upcoming events

May 12
NGINA Dubbo Trade Day
Dubbo, NSW
Ph: Robert Lee
02 6548 2472
Email: merriwa.nursery@hunterlink.net.au
www.ngina.com.au

May 19 - 23
RHS Chelsea Flower Show
Chelsea, United Kingdom
Email: info@rhs.org.uk
www.rhs.org.uk

May 20
NGIQ Brisbane Trade Day
Brisbane, Qld
Ph: Sarah Manser
07 3277 7900
Email: info@ngiq.asn.au

May 26
NGINA Wagga Wagga Trade Day
Wagga Wagga, NSW
Ph: Geoff Rapley
02 6922 5746
Email: info@ngina.com.au

May 27
NGIQ Manual Handling Training
Cairns, Qld
Ph: Ron Widman
07 3277 7900
Email: info@ngiq.asn.au

June 2
NGIV Trade Day
Melbourne, VIC
Ph: NGIV
03 9576 0599
Email: ngiv@ngiv.com.au

June 2
NGINA Trade Day
Rouse Hill, NSW
Ph: Nadine Venter
02 9679 1472
Email: info@ngina.com.au

Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show

The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS) was held from April 1 to 5 at Carlton Gardens, Melbourne. This year's event was arguably one of the best yet, with dazzling displays, glorious green-life and fantastic floral designs.

Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria (NGIV) had a strong presence at the show, with their involvement with the Avenue of Achievable Gardens, a stand and resting area for NGIV members, NGIV CEO Steven Potts helping judge the outdoor exhibits, and 'Revealed,' which launched new innovations in the Victorian industry.

For more photos of MIFGS go to www.ngiv.com.au



May edition of NGIA Clippings compiled and edited by Sarah McMahon, NGIA Communications & PR Coordinator.



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