



The Nursery Papers

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL NURSERY OPERATORS

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Accreditation for business success

NIASA accreditation - the professional approach!

NIASA (Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme, Australia) is a national scheme for production nursery (growers) and growing media (potting mix) businesses which operate in accordance with a set of national 'best practice' guidelines. The *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* have been developed over a period of years by respected industry representatives and researchers.

The aims of NIASA are;

- improve customer confidence at all levels of the distribution chain,
- improve the profitability of NIASA accredited businesses through the adoption of industry Best Practice,
- encourage the use of environmentally sound work practices,
- encourage the continuous improvement of NIASA accredited businesses and those working towards accreditation.

Who can join NIASA?

Any wholesale/production nursery or growing media/potting mix manufacturer in Australia can join NIASA if they implement the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines*.

The results of applying industry Best Practice are often very obvious.



"Becoming NIASA accredited is not just for the big nurseries, it is for any nursery that wants to be professional."

VAL BOMBARDIERE - AVONDALE NURSERIES LTD. NSW.

Participants are not required to belong to a nursery industry association.



Accredited media manufacturers have an immediate marketing advantage for supply to NIASA production nurseries, who prefer accredited suppliers.

Why join NIASA?

NIASA will help your business by improving customer confidence and improving your business's efficiency through best management practice.

"Accreditation has reduced my production costs and made the nursery easier to manage."

DARRYL SOUTH, DARWIN PLANT WHOLESALERS.

Many government departments and large landscape contractors now prefer to buy from NIASA nurseries. It is recognised and supported by many State/Territory Departments of Agriculture.

Customers have access to the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* and will know the standards required of your production system. They will also know your adherence to NIASA is objectively





"The recognition and prestige it brings is valuable to our growing business."

CRAIG HILL, SUMMERHILL NURSERIES VICTORIA.

assessed by a Technical Officer appointed and managed by your local NIASA committee.

The Technical Officer is available for information, interpretation and advice on industry Best Practice.

"Regular visits by the Technical Officer keeps me abreast of industry Best Practice and encourages worthwhile change."

WAYNE PARR - GOLDEN GROVE QLD.

The implementation of the Guidelines are a way of involving staff, as a team, in achieving Best Practice standards.

Joining NIASA also projects a positive public image due to the Guidelines requiring a demonstrated commitment to efficient and environmentally conscious water management, plant nutrition and pest management.

"Accreditation helps keep me on my toes with it's management system and gives me an edge."

EDDIE DEKKERS, FLORA PLANT, WA



Who is joining NIASA?

Current participants include growing media manufacturers, general production nurseries and specialists producing; seedlings, potted colour, fruit trees, tubestock, advanced trees, landscape lines, indoor foliage, and forestry trees.

There are currently as many businesses working towards NIASA as there are already accredited and most aim to achieve it within 1 to 3 years. Membership is totally voluntary.

Who administers NIASA?

The scheme members are responsible for the administration of NIASA.

"NIASA is industry self-regulation, not government legislation. It is responsible horticulture."

WAYNE BACCHI - WHOLESALE INDOOR FOLIAGE QLD.

State/Territory NIASA Committees consist of representatives from a wide range of businesses. They accredit applicants on the basis of the Technical Officers reports whilst ensuring complete confidentiality of the applicants by use of a numbering system. Sensitive information given to the Technical Officer is kept confidential.

The National Accreditation Committee administers the scheme nationally on behalf of the Nursery Industry Association of Australia (NIAA). They facilitate implementation of NIASA and coordinate promotion, marketing and technical improvements or updates to the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines*.

How do I get involved?

Step 1 Contact your state or territory nursery industry association and obtain a copy of the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines*,

Step 2 Use the guidelines to do a rough check of your operations to see if there are any obvious changes to be made,

Step 3 Contact your Technical Officer through the association to discuss the results of your investigations,

Step 4 Develop a plan for the implementation of the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* into your business (often 1 to 3 years),

Step 5 Apply for NIASA accreditation.

What are the requirements of NIASA?

The *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* spell out the technical and management requirements for participation in the scheme. Essentially they cover the following main areas;

A. An emphasis on the prevention of plant disease

Rather than attempting to control diseases after they appear NIASA stresses crop hygiene in order to prevent the original infection. The diseases of most concern are those carried in water and soil/growing media which are often not detected until it is too late. So where soil and water are likely to contain disease organisms they must not, without treatment, come into contact with crop plants.

Treatment of water to kill disease organisms (disinfestation) is required for all surface water supplies but usually not for town water or deep bores. Disinfestation procedures must be effective and monitored regularly, chlorination is the most common treatment.

Growing media/potting mix must be either; of a type that is free of contamination (eg vermiculite), supplied by a NIASA accredited manufacturer, or tested and treated according to the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines*. Media manufacturers must comply with strict disease testing and treatment regimes to qualify for NIASA accreditation.

Growing areas must be constructed in such a way as to minimise the risk of plants coming into contact with contaminated soils and drainage water. Good site drainage is essential to control normal runoff, prevent ponding and maintain effective hygiene. In ground production sites have their own specific guidelines including regular disease testing and traffic control.

Just one way of meeting NIASA guidelines. This new site was sloped to ensure correct drainage then overlaid with 3 layers - 1. Black builder's plastic to prevent drainage water coming into contact with soil. 2. Crushed rock to aid drainage and prevent ponding. 3. Weed mat to ease cleaning and reduce maintenance.



Scouting for pests and diseases at Falg Nurseries in South Australia enables early treatment.

B. An emphasis on effective control of insects, diseases and weeds

It is necessary that the operator or an appropriate employee (eg pest scout) can correctly identify pest problems as they occur and implement appropriate control measures (preferably Integrated Pest Management). Where the use of pesticides is necessary the business must be able to apply them effectively and safely. The responsible person must hold an appropriate certificate from the National Farm Chemical Users Course. Pesticide storage and mixing facilities must be securely sited and adequate for the purpose. Weeds, especially broad leaf ones which can harbour major pests and diseases, must be controlled.

"Because a lot of the trees we grow will be in the ground for over 50 years we have to supply quality seedlings."

DAVID CLIFFE, NARROMINE TRANSPLANTS NSW.



C. An emphasis on overall product quality

Accredited businesses are required to produce goods which meet their customers expectations. Growing media must meet the clients specification and perform adequately. Plants must have adequate nutrition, be correctly acclimatised, and in an acceptable media.

D. An emphasis on staff skills

Staff must be competent in many areas such as effective nursery hygiene and where appropriate the safe and effective use of chemicals. Training courses and workshops are being offered to assist both accredited businesses and those working towards accreditation.

"Our nursery staff have become more professional as a result of NIASA."

ARTHUR MAAIT - ALPINE NURSERIES NSW.



The WaterWork workshop helps growers and staff understand and improve their water management.

E. An emphasis on informed management decisions

Sound decisions are made on correct information and NIASA accredited businesses must keep appropriate records.

"NIASA has helped me target priority areas for changes to nursery infrastructure. I especially appreciate the discipline it encourages."

PETER MINGE, NURIOOTPA NURSERIES SA.

Accurate records of the following will aid decision making: irrigation water quality and treatment; growing media quality; plant protection chemical applications; water disinfestation records.

Recording sheets for each of these aspects are available or you can use your own. Technical

Officers look at these records to identify trends, recommend appropriate actions and to ensure that the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* are being observed.

Can NIASA change?

Yes, because as technology changes the *NIASA Best Practice Guidelines* will require updating. The National Accreditation Committee takes advice on technical matters from the NIASA Technical Officers Group which is made up of Technical Officers from each state. The committee must be mindful of the need to ensure that changes will benefit existing NIASA businesses without becoming so complex as to discourage those seeking accreditation. The scheme is dynamic and will continue to embrace relevant research results which improve efficiency and profitability across the range of business types and sizes.

The bottom line

NIASA businesses have identified the following key benefits;

- Improved **profitability** through less waste and improved management systems,
- Enhanced **professionalism** through peer recognition and staff involvement,
- Higher customer **confidence** through reliability and application of best practice.

Further information

For more information on NIASA locally phone; Queensland (07) 3277 7900.

Northern Territory (08) 8999 2338.

Western Australia (08) 9325 8252.

South Australia (08) 8303 9578.

Tasmania (03) 6336 5279.

Victoria (03) 9576 0599.

New South Wales (02) 9679 1472.

For information on national matters call Ian Atkinson, *National NIDO* (02) 6260 5880 or Gary Gibson, *Secretary National Accreditation Committee* (02) 9876 5200. We are also on the internet at

<http://www.niaa.org.au/niasa/index.html>



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