

NURSERY PAPERS

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NIASA Greenlife Market Accreditation

Following the inception of the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) in 1996, there has been over 260 businesses gain NIASA accreditation. During this time, the program has gone through several updates to ensure it continues to meet Industry Best Practice. In 2010, the National NIASA Accreditation Committee identified an opportunity within the program for Greenlife Markets to gain NIASA Greenlife Market accreditation. In this Nursery Paper NGISA Industry Development Officer (IDO), Grant Dalwood outlines how Greenlife Markets can become accredited under the NIASA program.



NIASA Greenlife Market Accreditation

Introduction

'Greenlife Markets', commonly referred to as wholesale plant markets, are trade-only businesses that supply greenlife and allied products to the landscape, horticultural, local government, retail nursery and development sectors. Greenlife and allied products are sourced from a variety of businesses across Australia including NIASA accredited production nurseries and growing media suppliers.

With the continual take up and advancement of the NIASA program, there has been an increasing expectation from growers to extend the benefits of NIASA from accredited growers to resellers and then onto the final user. In order to achieve this, the National NIASA Accreditation Committee has developed a 'Greenlife Markets' accreditation appendix 14 to the NIASA Best Management Practice program.

In order for Greenlife Markets to meet the requirements of this appendix, they must meet many of the existing NIASA standards for production nurseries/growing media suppliers in addition to several new parameters that apply only to their sector.

NIASA Greenlife Markets extend the benefits of the Nursery Production Farm Management System

As with the existing NIASA accreditation program, membership to Greenlife Markets accreditation is voluntary and businesses do not need to belong to a nursery industry association. They do, however, need to comply with regular NIASA Greenlife Market accreditation audits. These audits are carried out by an IDO at least annually and follow a stringent checklist. There are several key areas covered in the checklist relating to water management, site security and site management. As part of the process, businesses seeking Greenlife Markets accreditation are required to identify products sourced from NIASA accredited businesses both at receipt and point of sale, a major factor that raises the exposure of existing NIASA businesses. Recognition of existing NIASA accredited suppliers and the efforts they have gone to in order to reach a high level of Best Management Practice are vital to encourage growth of the program within the Australian market place.

Greenlife Markets vary in structure from owner operated to large public companies, their point of difference often is found in the owner's expertise, sectors of the market that they service and variation of stock styles and growers represented, all pertinent factors ensuring success with plants that will be suited to local environmental conditions. Greenlife businesses present as a key link in the supply chain and it is imperative that they maintain a high standard to ensure the best possible conditions to supply greenlife and allied products to the landscape, horticultural, local government, retail nursery and development sectors. Today's Greenlife Market is also required to conform to not only standard business practices including cash flow, payment terms, on forwarding

delivery and customer relations but also location and on-site maintenance of a wide variety of plant types.

The NIASA Greenlife Market accreditation process has been developed to allow the strengths of the Nursery Production Farm Management System program to flow through a more professional channel to the eventual end user. Some of the key areas covered in this accreditation include:

1. Enhanced emphasis on the intake procedures of stock due to the varied nature of products entering the market site
2. Emphasis on the Trade Only nature of these businesses
3. Consideration of customer requirements including vehicle access
4. Differentiation of product sourced from NIASA accredited suppliers
5. The need for policies including Greenlife Market Service Policy, Greenlife Market Standard and Supplier Declaration.

In some instances, Greenlife Markets may also produce nursery stock on-site or on an associated production nursery. In the former (attached growing site), the growing facility is considered a separate production nursery and must be clearly separated from the Greenlife Market (e.g. with fences, access restrictions and suitable drainage). The associated production nursery (on a separate site) must also be managed independently (i.e. invoiced separately) and may attain NIASA Best Management Practice accreditation for production nurseries in their own right.

Areas covered in NIASA 'Greenlife Market' accreditation

Trade only access

Greenlife Markets are accessible to trade customers only and should develop and deliver a Greenlife Market Service Policy that details customer access requirements and that this written policy is provided to customers and suppliers with terms and conditions of trade. At the entrance of the business, appropriate signage must also be present that denotes the business as trade only.



Trade only signage at the entrance to a Greenlife Market. Alpine Nurseries Dural NSW

Vehicle access

Vehicular access is paramount in Greenlife Markets to ensure customer and supplier needs are accommodated. Separation of vehicular access are encouraged to avoid conflict (customer vs. supplier). Parking facilities must be clearly sign posted, safety regards for pedestrians followed, and drainage away from areas holding nursery stock maintained. Vehicle access to Greenlife Market sites must be restricted to nursery vehicles only unless absolutely necessary. Vehicles used by contractors/sub-contractors e.g. spray contractors should be checked into a low risk area for soil, crop residues, weed seeds, live pests and possible diseases. Contaminated vehicles must be either decontaminated or refused entry to the site until they are free of contaminant. All other vehicles are prohibited entry to display areas of Greenlife Market sites.

Customer requirements

Clear and easy to follow directional signage must be provided within the Greenlife Market site that specifies areas such as customer service area/pay point, toilets, indoor/outdoor market areas etc. Pathways and access routes within the Greenlife Market must be safe, well maintained and free from obstructions. The surface must be firm, non slippery and without obstruction

from obstacles such as hoses. A dedicated dispatch area must be available that is easily assessable by customers following invoicing. Greenlife markets that have on-site water storages must ensure they are secured from unauthorised access.



Trolleys are provided in adequate supply to allow customers to collect and move purchases. Alpine Nurseries Dural NSW.

Professional appearance

The Greenlife Market is required to have an overall attractive, tidy and professional appearance at all times. Similarly, as with Australian Garden Centre Accreditation Scheme (AGCAS) retail standards, staff should present in a neat, tidy uniform including a name badge. At all times there must be a qualified nursery person or experienced horticultural staff on duty. All staff must complete a NIASA Greenlife Market induction to familiarise themselves with the NIASA Best Management Practice Guidelines.

Merchandise displays

Where greenlife and allied materials are sold, it is necessary to clearly denote and differentiate merchandise supplied by NIASA accredited businesses in the market. It is a critical factor that NIASA merchandise is prominent to trade customers by placement of the NIASA logo on price tags/barcodes or via signage, promoted strategically throughout the market and on Greenlife Market documents.

Origin of plant material

Owing to the high volume of greenlife entering and leaving Greenlife Markets, these sites require heightened biosecurity arrangements to minimise the transfer of pests, diseases and weeds. Consideration of on-site management practices in addition to careful site planning is also important in reducing the spread of pests, diseases and weeds.

All incoming plant consignments should be clearly identified and moved to a designated intake inspection area within close proximity to the receivals point. All plant consignments entering the Greenlife Market should be appropriately labeled with correct botanical nomenclature in accordance with NGIA National Plant Labeling Guidelines.

Upon arrival in the holding area, each plant consignment must undergo an inspection by a suitably trained & authorised responsible person. NIASA accredited and non-NIASA stock should be separated. The authorised person must be trained and skilled in pest and disease identification and should also be conversant with State/Territory plant health requirements and weed lists.

The Greenlife Market will have access to a current list of NIASA accredited suppliers to ensure that consignments are correctly identified upon arrival. For greenlife originating from a NIASA supplier, the plant health status is confirmed upon receipt of nursery stock. NIASA accredited greenlife that is transported to the Greenlife Market in a mixed consignment, with non-NIASA greenlife, as well as consignments of

non-NIASA greenlife must be inspected as follows:

1. A declaration from the supplier is required stating the nursery stock in each consignment is believed to be free of pest, disease and weeds.
2. At the time of arrival or soon after, one-third or more of the non-NIASA greenlife must be inspected (a minimum of five plants inspected per consignment). Severely pest-infected (insects/weeds) or diseased shipments should be rejected and not allowed entry into the Greenlife Market.

A suggested plant inspection procedure is provided in the Greenlife Market appendix.

Traceability

The ability to effectively trace and confirm the origin and destination of every plant is critical in controlling the spread of pests, diseases and weeds and to provide a mechanism to assist in the containment or eradication of exotic plant pest incursions. Greenlife Markets must have an effective traceability system to confirm the origin and destination of all plant material entering or leaving the Greenlife Market. This system must also be easily accessed by designated staff in a timely manner and house records dating back five years.

Greenlife Standards Policy

To demonstrate a high level of crop management, a written Greenlife Standards Policy must be developed and followed by market personnel. This policy should incorporate aspects such as nutrition and fertiliser management, irrigation techniques and pest, disease and weed management. It should also demonstrate awareness of growing conditions (i.e. light and temperature requirements, etc.) and must be enforced on-site at all times at undercover and outdoor growing areas. A critical component of this standard must detail the process of acceptance of nursery stock originating from NIASA and non-NIASA nurseries as discussed in the 'origin of plant material' section.

Site security

Work areas such as loading docks, quarantine, order consolidation/holding areas and maintenance areas should be screened from the public and clearly sign posted as Staff Only. Access to growing areas at Greenlife Markets must be separated and excluded from unauthorised access and must be sign posted as Staff Only/Authorised Access. Adequate fencing or protection of market sites is vital to ensure security of supplier stock and prevent unauthorised public access. The fencing must be designed to prevent unnecessary traffic, staff and 'pests' such as large animals from introducing soil contaminated with disease pathogens, nematodes or weed seeds.

Site management

Greenlife Markets must demonstrate a high level of crop hygiene to minimise the risk of pathogen contamination and spread. Plants and their containers must not come into contact with possible contaminated substances and surfaces e.g. such as run-off water, soil or plants or contaminated materials during handling operations within the Greenlife Market. Correct use and storage of containers and consideration of the production bed and benching requirements for indoor and outdoor growing areas is paramount to ensure a high standard of crop hygiene. Bare rooted plants held in stock holding bays must not come into contact with bare earth, run-off water or other possible contaminants and each unique consignment must be held in separate holding bays. These holding bays must be freely draining and isolated from any water runoff from other areas, such as paths or other display areas. General weed management across the site is required as good site hygiene will greatly reduce the incidence of pest and disease.

Water management

Water should be managed in accordance with the NIASA Best Management Practice Guidelines.

This includes operating an efficient irrigation system suitable to the Greenlife Market site conditions and demonstrating an understanding of water requirements of the nursery stock grown. Disinfestation of all surface water sources (e.g. dams, creeks or recycled water) used for irrigation is mandatory to kill harmful plant pathogens. This aspect is a key risk management strategy of NIASA accreditation.

Consideration of the irrigation scheduling should minimise disruption to consumer traffic and prevent ponding or slippery surfaces.



Irrigation scheduling should be applied with minimal disruption to consumer traffic. Nursery Traders QLD.

Growing media

Where a Greenlife Market stages crops (pots on) and/or uses growing media or propagation mixes, it is necessary that these are free of pests and diseases, weeds and weed propagules. Growing media components, such as sawdust, used to support bare rooted plants in stock holding beds is also required to be free from pests and diseases, weeds and weed propagules. Growing media, propagation mixes or growing media components that are not sourced from an approved NIASA growing media supplier must be pathogen tested.

Pesticides and spraying equipment

On-site usage

Chemical control should be seen as a last resort strategy for managing pests, diseases and weeds onsite. Where pesticides (insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, etc.) are used, secure storage facilities must be provided that meets the requirements of the relevant government authorities and NIASA Best Management Practice Guidelines. This includes having competent trained staff responsible for crop protection including pesticide application, storage, recording and the maintenance of pesticide application equipment. In addition, a folder containing Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all products used on-site must be maintained and updated annually.

Re-saleable product

Pesticides sold to consumers must be stored appropriately to meet the statutory requirement of each State/Territory. For example, products marked 'Dangerous Poison', 'Poison', 'Caution' or 'Keep out of reach of children' should be displayed at least 1.2 m above floor level. Fertilisers and pesticides must be clearly separated and liquid pesticides should be merchandised below powder pesticides on sturdy shelving. Items must be merchandised and displayed in a safe and stable manner and where appropriate, warning information signs must be displayed. Products should be grouped according to purpose, protected from weather and displayed in a customer friendly way. Signs used to label products including pricing should be clear, in good condition and easy to follow and understand.

A suitably qualified staff member should always be on duty to provide correct advice about these products. A chemical clean up kit should be located near the selling area and at all times, a staff member trained in handling chemical spills should be on duty. A folder containing MSDS for all merchandised products should be maintained and updated annually.

Conclusion

The addition of the Greenlife Markets appendix to the NIASA program is an exciting development that will see heightened professionalism across this important sector of the Australian nursery industry. If you are a Greenlife Market and wish to begin your NIASA Greenlife Markets Accreditation journey, contact your local state/territory NGI Association.

Acknowledgments

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Feedback in the development of these guidelines was received from State/Territory Nursery & Garden Industry Associations through the National NIASA Advisory Committee (NNAC).

Further Information

The following Nursery Papers:

- What is NIASA and how can it benefit you? May 2008 Issue 3
- Your Development Officers. October 2003 Issue 10
- The benefits of being professional – accreditation. January 2003 Issue 1
- Plant Labelling – the first point of contact is knowing about the plant. June 2010 Issue 5