

## Formulation of a Production Program for Container-Grown Plants—A Nursery Manager's Approach

**Peter Lewis**

448 Old Cleveland Road, Birkdale, Queensland, 4159

One of the most rewarding experiences for a nursery person is observing the successful release of new and improved product lines into a discerning market. However, many fail to appreciate the challenging and sometimes frustrating stages necessary in developing a product from “grow” to “woah”. While often it may be tempting to take a chance in the rush to introduce new lines to the market, a methodical approach is more likely to be successful.

A suggested plan for the formulation of a production program includes:

- Identify any special production requirements of the plant species/cultivar for a new or existing stock line. Background information can be obtained from past production experience with related species and published literature. Concisely summarise these findings, highlighting the important agronomic traits.
- Conduct trials using existing nursery production programs. Grow trial batches throughout the nursery for at least a 1-year production cycle. This will give an indication of how the plant performs through each season. Microclimates which exist throughout production areas may also have a significant effect on plant performance.

Detailed records should be kept of the trial progress, this includes weather information, pest and disease details, written descriptions and photographic records of plant health and vigour.

The information gained from the literature, together with the trial results, forms a useful basis to determine whether production of a particular line is feasible.

Some further points which may influence production viability include:

- Market climate, e.g., consumer demand and expectation, competition from other producers.
- Potential production problems, e.g., need for specialised growing facilities, specific nutritional programs.

Pending consideration of the above factors future trial work can be directed towards the refinement of production techniques. Patience is the key to successful product development, sufficient time must be allowed to fully overcome production problems and explore new marketing ideas.