

## **New Plant Principals at North Creek Nurseries<sup>©</sup>**

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### **BACKGROUND**

With all of the new plants hitting the market these days how does a young plant company/propagator figure out which plants are the best to add to their catalog and offer to the marketplace? In recent years, there has been a proliferation of plant breeding companies, plant breeder representatives, as well as, plant breeders themselves. All of these companies are promoting their plants as being superior to existing cultivars. At North Creek Nurseries (NCN), we have developed certain principals that define our process for introducing plants. This practice helps us define which plants we will ultimately introduce.

Our goal is to bring to market great new plants and offer the best value to our customers.

This objective is based on the following principles:

- Our plant introductions will be excellent garden and/or landscape performers in the mid-Atlantic region.
- Our plants are not invasive or aggressive.
- Once established in an appropriate site, our plants require no material input to maintain their ornamental value or garden worthiness.

As part of our evaluation, we ask: Is it a “North Creek Plant”?

Other factors that we consider in making this determination are these:

- Is the plant garden worthy, hardy, and a performer: does it “stand the test of time”?
- Is there currently demand, or can demand for the product be established?
- Does it have marketable qualities?
- Is propagation material available?
- Have propagation and production protocols been worked thorough to insure success?

Based on the outcome of the above mentioned criteria, the decision to introduce a plant is made.

### **INTRODUCTION IS A TEAM EFFORT**

At NCN, the following staff members are instrumental in gathering information, testing, and evaluating new products: the new products manager, plant trials coordinator, production manager, operations manager, the sales and marketing department as well as our customer service team all provide valuable input. Customers are also questioned when they visit us and express interest in a plant.

The new products manager gathers information on all plants of interest and creates a plant “fantasy list”. Information comes from the introduction company, our nursery, botanic garden visits, as well as our customers’ interests. These lists are then reviewed by our new-plant-committee members. As an outcome of those discussions, and a review of the plant selections, a decision is made as to which plants to trial. Anyone at NCN can add a plant of interest to our “Future Plant Fantasies” list. They just need to be able to defend their nominations by addressing the criteria mentioned above. Inventory information is managed through research and development accession numbers, which are managed by the new products and trials manager.

Plants in our trials are maintained by the plant trials manager and are evaluated for performance and garden worthiness on a monthly basis by the new products committee. Most plants are evaluated over a 3-year period to determine hardiness and cultural characteristics.

Plants sources are researched as necessary. Plants are further trialed for production worthiness and research is done on propagation type (tissue culture, cutting, divisions, or seed propagation) and scheduling. In the garden, photographs are taken for landscape

style, close up, and habit images. The top picks are advanced to the introduction queue list.

During our meetings, introductions are decided upon. The new products committee determines production goals, finished size, and target production quantities. This process is outlined on our process map (Fig. 1). The process summary includes:

- Plant names and detailed descriptions are added to the “Hot List” which is where we add potential new introductions. From here, we send meeting minutes to notify all pertinent NCN employees of the new Items.
- If the plant is patented, the breeder is notified and a license is obtained. A request for photography from the breeder or an introduction source may also be requested.
- Presentations are made to our sales and customer service department, as well as other members of our staff. Formatted photos are added to the NCN Image Library and Photo Share folder.
- An electronic new plant presentation (Power Point®) is created for marketing to customers and brokers.
- Webpages are created and content is added to our website.
- Plant tags are ordered based on production quantities and placed into inventory.
- Samples are sent to garden writers and key customers.
- The plant is added to our catalog.
- Communication begins with our customers and key accounts to promote these new introductions.
- The sales process continues, orders are placed, and plants are sold!

The plant introducer and breeder are happy and NCN can be proud that we can stand behind this newly introduced selection.

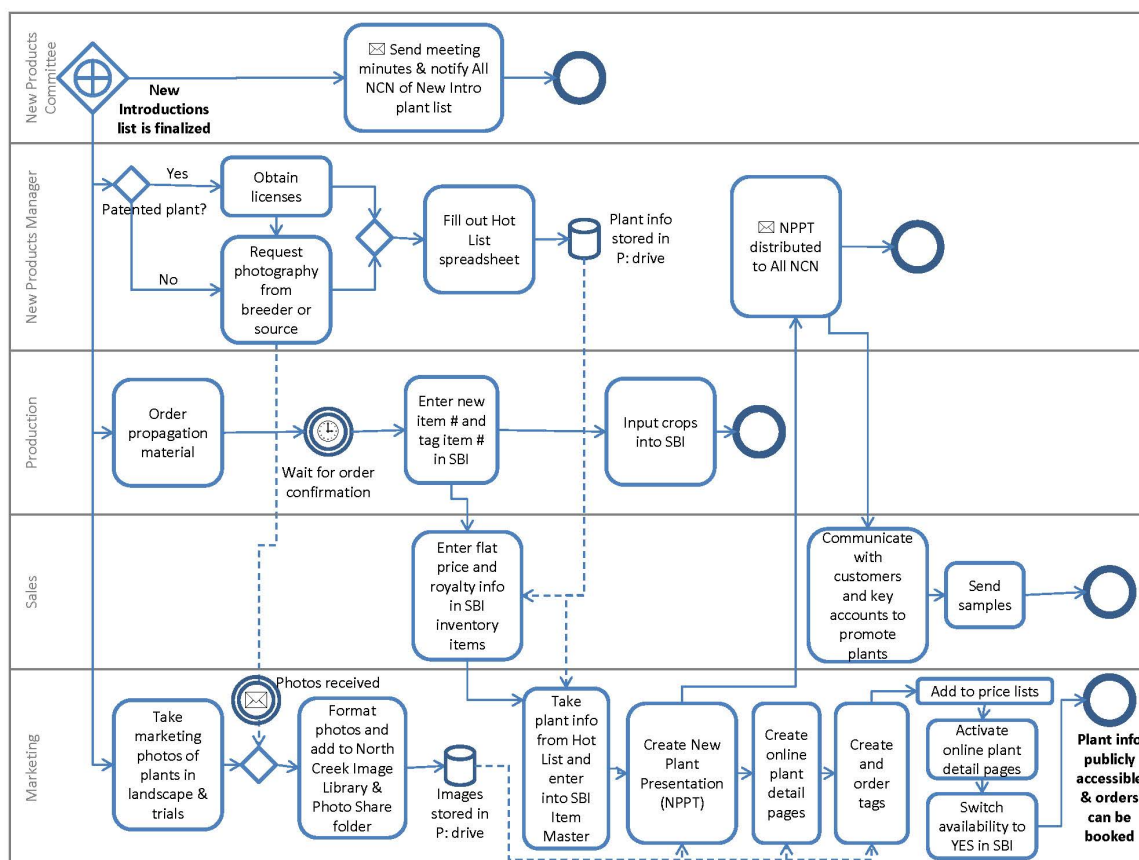


Fig. 1. Outline of our process.