

Innovative Products, Services, and Nurseries®

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“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.” Michelangelo (not the Turtle!)

INTRODUCTION

Innovation is seen by many people to be many different things. For some it is something that somebody else does, for others they can be too innovative and waste a lot of time and money. People in the nursery industry should be innovative and use it to their effect. For me, innovation is:

- Taking an idea and using it to improve your business.
- The key to future business prosperity and can take place in all areas of the business process.
- Not just for big multi-national businesses — it is for you!
- Crucial.
- Something to be promoted and nurtured.
- Great for solving problems.
- More than just invention.
- Okay to copy if somebody else has already carried out good innovation that suits you.

THREE TYPES OF INNOVATION

Whether you are talking about products, services, or processes, there are three main types of innovation:

- 1) Product innovation — Development of new products, ranges, or services.
- 2) Product improvement — Improving on existing products, ranges, or services.
- 3) Process improvement — Improving existing processes in your business to improve outcomes.

PROMOTING AND NURTURING INNOVATION

Innovation is one of those things that can “just happen” but it can and should also be promoted in your nursery business. It all starts with an idea! Regardless of the size or nature of your business consider the following points about innovation:

- Even the smallest idea can lead to great change or improvement.
- Be flexible and open to new ideas.
- Listen to your customers — They are your source of income.
- Listen to your staff — Everyone in your business can be innovative.
- A free flow of information is crucial — Do you have a “Suggestion Box”?
- A culture of continuous learning and continual improvement should be encouraged and practiced.
- Promote and nurture innovation.

WHY INNOVATE?

Why should you innovate? Everybody should innovate because it has the potential to do good things for your business. It might save you time and money or earn you more money.

Good Innovation:

- Drives the productivity performance.
- Promotes better productivity performance.
- Allows you to grow faster and generate higher quality.
- Allows businesses to differentiate their products and/or services and can create distinct competitive advantages.
- Produces other social, personal, and environmental outcomes amongst staff.
- Achieves better quality of end product.

IS ALL INNOVATION GOOD?

Innovation should be a good starting point but don't take silly risks and make poor decisions in your business. Innovation for the sake of innovation should be left for the very big businesses.

Consider the need for innovation and what it is you are trying to achieve:

- What problems are you solving that are not being solved now — or not solved well?
- Why do you need to change — economic; occupational, health and safety; social values; technology; demographics?
- Is there an excess demand situation already in this area?
- Is there a sizeable potential market?
- What is the gap you are filling?
- Can the problem be solved a different way? — Don't reinvent the wheel.

CONCLUSION AND TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- Innovation is not new and is not something you do once and forget about it.
- Innovation should be ongoing, nurtured, and a part of your every-day business.
- Everybody can, and should, innovate.
- Innovation will save time and money and increase sales, productivity, and staff morale.

What should you do — An Action Plan.

- Promote innovation in your workplace — have brainstorming sessions and install a suggestion box.
- Look at what other businesses are doing.
- Think outside the square.
- Search for inspiration and ways to solve problems from within and externally to your own business and industry.

REFERENCES, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Department of Industry Tourism and Resources. Australian Government — National Innovation Website <<http://www.innovation.gov.au>>.

Thanks to all of those nursery businesses whose innovation and ingenuity I have called on or photographed for this presentation.

Table 1. Examples of good innovation in the nursery industry in Australia.

Innovation	Business	Details	
Innovation in Dubbo			
1. Rose cutting planter	Swane's Nurseries	A simple metal planter ensures correct planting.	
2. Boom sprayers (irrigation)	Narromine Transplants	Installed booms in forestry nursery when they were not common in nurseries in Australia.	
3. Insect mesh on vents	Enza Zadden	Mesh covering vents to stop thrip and other insect invasions.	
Pest and Disease Control			
4. Wanjet pesticide applicator	Hortwide Services	Great distribution of pesticides in closed environment. Safe and simple operation.	
5. Closed footbath	Proteafloa Nursery	Excellent and hygienic. Closed to reduce contamination.	
6. Covered door holes on greenhouse	Unknown	Potential gaps on vents closed to prevent infiltration.	

- 7. Portable chemical store Smarts Nursery Concrete water tank type – can be moved, strong and insulated.



Algae Control

- 8. Water aeration – simple Greenhills Propagation Nursery Simple water pipe spraying water into dam to aerate.



- 9. Klorman chlorine dispenser AQIS Quarantine Nursery – Knox Portable and adjustable dispensing unit for calcium hypochlorite.



- 10. Rio Aerator Hortwide Services 1.5 kw electric aerator. Reduces algal loads in dams significantly.



Safer Handling

- 11. Pot stands for media bins AQIS Quarantine Nursery – Knox Makes moving heavy media bins easier and safer.



- 12. Fertiliser injector on trolley Mansfield's Propagation Nursery Allows portability for fertiliser injector and reduces risk of spillage.



Innovation	Business	Details	
13. Tree trolley	Specialty Trees	Easy movement of large potted trees.	
14. Extended pot handles and conveyer system	Oz Plants	Excellent for moving large numbers of pots quickly and easy on the back.	
15. Hydraulic pot lifter	Specialty Trees	Allows easier potting and movement of large potted trees.	
Energy Saving			
16. Solar pump unit	Mansfield's Propagation Nursery	Solar pumping system on wetlands. Tracks the sun for maximum efficiency.	
Better Irrigation and Watering			
17. PVC on watering wand	Faceys Nursery	PVC ring protects end of watering wand.	

- 18. Frost box over solenoid Faceys Nursery Protects from extreme frosts. Simple and easy.

- 19. Ball valve on sprinkler Parkswide Nursery Individual control over each sprinkler.

- 20. Automatic watering of all pots Warner's Nursery Don't hand water any pots if you don't have to.

- 21. Potting watering boom Dreamtime Nursery Excellent boom, located near the potting shed. Reduces drainage of particulates on the standing bays.



Innovative Selling

- 22. Mini greenhouse Nielsen's Nursery Saleable mini planter aimed at kids planting and kitchen gardening.

- 23. Christmas pots Karinga Nursery Themed planting – extra sales and profitability.



Innovation	Business	Details	
24. Bloom Master pot	Bloom Master Australia	Innovative yet simple planter for maximum effect.	
25. Organic grass pot	Debco	Great environmentally and for marketing.	
26. Christmas decoration	Conifer Gardens	Making normal plants Christmas plants.	
27. Christmas tins	Scotsburn Nurseries	Normal plants – Christmas decorated and galvanised planters.	
28. Promotional plantings	Touch of Class Plants	Planting at Chadstone shopping centre. Consider the number of passers by.	
29. Aussie Christmas tree	Conifer Gardens	The Woolemi pine. An excellent Christmas line.	

Dust Control – Risk Management

- 30. Vent fans in roof Mansfield’s Propagation Nursery Simple and effective. Also helps reduce ambient temperatures in summer.

- 31. Dust extraction fan on propagation bench Plant Growers Australia Simple yet effective. Works well.



Handling and Managing Potting Mix

- 32. Moveable potting mix cover AQIS Quarantine Nursery – Knox Simple and effective. Allows for trucks to deliver mix easily and protects from pollution and the elements.

- 33. Metal steaming bins National Botanic Gardens’ Nursery – Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Portable and individual steamers and on wheels as well.

- 34. Front loading potting benches in shed Shones Nursery Allows loading of potting mix safely and without interruption.

- 35. Shipping container converted to steam room Portagallo Nursery Simple, safe, cheap, and effective. Very practical.



Innovation	Business	Details	
Innovative Products and Tools			
36. Automatic pot washer	No longer available	Excellent idea. Not a great seller in NZ so no longer in production.	
37. Manual pot washer	Clyde Plant Nursery	Simple and effective. Uses a plastic 10-L bucket.	
38. Plastic pot filler tool	Daleys Nursery	Made from a plastic bottle. Works just as well.	
39. Vacuum punnet loader	Meadow Creek Nursery	Hand made and automatically vacuum loads punnets into trays.	
40. Tray and punnet emptier	Meadow Creek Nursery	Quickly and easily empties punnets and punnet trays.	
Labour Saving			
41. Collection tub in sump	NZ	Allows easy and fast cleaning of sumps in greenhouse.	

42. Collection tub in sump – stainless steel National Botanic Gardens’ Nursery – ACT Allows easy and fast cleaning of sumps in greenhouse.



43. Pot mats AQIS Quarantine Nursery – Knox Significantly reduces weed growth, labour, and water use.



44. Ride-on floor sweeper Mansfield’s Propagation Nursery Simple and very effective. Makes a huge difference.



Other Innovations

45. Row makers Warner’s Nursery Simple and easy to read. Long life and cheap.



46. Pot-in-pot litter bins Greenhill’s Propagation Easy and simple. Works well and saves time



Innovative Plant Movement

47. Long, variable speed conveyers Oz Plants Right height and variable – whole length of greenhouse.

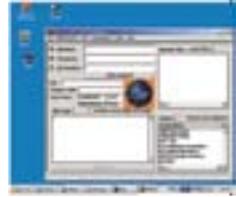


Innovation	Business	Details	
48. Altered trolleys	Mountflora	Plant trolleys altered to fit maximum number into van.	
Save Your Back			
49. Work chairs on wheels	Engels Nursery	Potted working platforms, work comfortably seated and shaded.	
50. Wire pot stander	Faceys Nursery	Simple and saves time, back and hours.	
Staff Safety			
51. Safe working cage for heights	Mansfield's Propagation Nursery	Engineer designed and constructed. Lifts using forklift.	
52. Safety cover on exposed pipe	Parkswide Nursery	Strong, simple, and well installed. Solves a common problem.	
Innovative Services			
53. Consumer water delivery service	Chris & Marie's Plant Farm	Good earner, meets customer needs.	

54. Web-based
Faxing Service

Fax.com

Cheaper and better
mass fax delivery.



55. PDA Invoicing
and sales

Alameda Nursery

Simple (once
installed) and
very effective.
Reduces mistakes
and increases
productivity and
turn-around time.

