

Report Back From 2008 Southern African-Australian Region Exchange Student[©]

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As the Southern African IPPS exchange student for 2008, it is with great pleasure that I am able to give a brief overview of my 3-week stay in Australia.

Upon my arrival in Australia, I was kindly taken in by Greg and Lindy McPhee, who live in Lismore, New South Wales. Greg went to great lengths to make sure I see and experience as much as possible of the Australian Horticultural Industry during my stay in Lismore. Not only was I shown numerous advanced nurseries, but I was also given the opportunity to lend a hand in several nurseries, gaining valuable hands-on experience. This also provided me with an excellent opportunity to chat to employees and employers alike, about issues concerning the industry.

During a visit to the "Gardening Expo" in Brisbane, I was exposed to the diversity of the industry as well as the latest trends in Australian gardening. Although there was loads more to see and learn in and around Lismore, it was time for me to move on. Greg kindly drove me to David and Di Cliffe residing in Narromine, New South Wales.

David is the current IPPS President of the Australian Region and owner of Narromine Transplants, a commercial *Eucalyptus* producer. Narromine didn't offer as great a range of horticultural enterprises due to its isolation, however during my days at Narromine Transplants, I was given the opportunity to assist from propagation to dispatch. A visit to the neighbouring international seed company, Enza Zaden, was also very enlightening.

After 5 very insightful days in Narromine, David and I flew to the 36th annual IPPS conference held at the York on Lilydale Resort in Melbourne, Victoria. As part of the "six-pack," a group of six young propagators from all over Australia, I assisted with the preparations for the conference. Another member of the "six-pack" was Nathan Sparks, the Australian IPPS exchange student, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the South African conference held in Hermanus during March 2008. Approximately 200 delegates from all over Australia attended the 3-day conference under the theme of "Opportunity Through Diversity." At the conference during the section "Youth and Diversity," I presented a paper on my propagation research conducted on bio-diesel trees at the University of Pretoria.

Diversity within the industry was also exemplified during the conference nursery tour. As we were shown from a nursery growing Proteaceae, indigenous to South Africa, to an award-winning retail nursery specializing in indigenous Australian flora.

Unfortunately the conference came to an end and with it came time to part from new friends. Before my return to South Africa, Greg McPhee took the time to show me Sydney, and thereby concluding the three most amazing weeks in Australia.

I want to use this opportunity to thank the McPhees and Cliffes for their hospitality, the IPPS Australian Region, and last but not least the IPPS Southern African region and the members thereof for making this unforgettable experience possible.