



Scott & Stephanie Hogg of Plant Culture

Plant Culture Nursery is a family run business with Scott & Stephanie Hogg at the helm. An integral part of this close knit group is newly appointed Jonathan Lake, the nursery manger and the staff who all form part of this family affair. The total staff compliment is a dynamic team of 14. The building of strong and meaningful relationships with both staff, customers and suppliers, is one of the reasons to which Scott attributes the successful growth of the nursery.



Jonathan, Nursery Manager

Plant Cultures' key lines are trees in the 60L and 125L range, together with a selection of landscaping and large shrubs. The quality and size of the plants are really good, while the prices remain some of the best value for money in the industry. Asked how they manage to keep their prices so low, Scott replied: 'Keeping a keen eye on overhead costs and being personally involved

in the day to day expenses'. Asked about the future: 'We are currently, as a wholesaler, small, with around 12 thousand trees thus far, however we aim to grow as time (and money) permits, bringing in new varieties and larger volumes. The nursery has recently had to expand onto a new piece of land, which luckily for us is just down the road. Operating on both farms has opened up some great opportunities which we look forward to developing and telling you about soon'.

The nursery has a very informative website which readers can access, showing all their availability lists and photos of current stock items. In addition to this, is the monthly newsletter which Scott writes. Should you wish to be included on the monthly email availability and price list, please email or call the office, give them your details and they'll happily keep you posted.

Scott, his wife Stephanie, Jonathan and the Plant Culture



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team, wish the readers well and look forward to seeing and assisting them soon. It's your support, orders and advise that helps us to grow, thank you, we really appreciate this. As part of the green industries' family, we look forward to growing with you and your businesses while continuing to bring greenery to all our environments.

Plant Culture is located in the Winelands between Somerset West and Stellenbosch - well situated for both collections and deliveries. Times are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Mon to Friday, maps and directions are available on their webpage or faxable on enquiry.

More details are available on the Plant Culture website www.plantculture.co.za or they can be contacted at tel: 021 855 1591 fax: 021 855 5035 Scott 082 377 8582 Jonathan 079 476 6223 or email info@plantculture.co.za.



THE CAPE GREEN TIMES

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE CAPE GREEN FORUM

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Despite the gloomy financial forecasts, the February Trade Day was well attended and visitors were once again impressed by the 49 exhibitors, of which 9 were total new comers. The plants looked happy and healthy and lots of energy was put into creating interesting stands.



Thanks to our judges, Tarna Klitzner Landscape Architect and Redwanna Isaacs, of Namkwa, who had a hard time deciding on the finalists, it took them ages! The results were: Best Plant Stand - Arnelia Proteas, 2nd place Treeco and 3rd Exotic Nursery. Best Allied Stand - Rock Pots, 2nd place Master Organics and 3rd Just Stone.

Trade days are a wonderful place to see what's on offer in the Cape, to renew contacts and to network - really a day not to be missed. The next one will be held on Wed. 19 August 2009, so

please diarise.

The committee has lots planned for the 1st half of the year. A visit to the "One and Only Hotel" in April, a talk by Kay Montgomery, working for water nursery partnership programme - "PLANT ME INSTEAD" - 27 May and a proposed 2 day tour up to Gauteng in July, visiting some nurseries and the Malansea Trade Day. Why not get involved and attend some of these the events? Meet people in the same field, share ideas and problems and work together through the Cape Green Forum in these tough times.

Have a look at the website - www.capegreenforum.co.za, it is new and a work in progress. We hope to update it at least



once a month, if you have anything to contribute please do so.

This issue is for armchair travellers, a visit to Australia with Inus, to Japan with Nick and the letter below. A big thanks to those who contribute so willingly.



TRADE DAY THANKS GOES TO:
Neutrog for donating the first prize for the plant stand - half a ton of product.
Richard Morris for donating the 2nd & 3rd prizes - bird feeders & owl boxes.
Synthetic Turf Co for supplying the lawn at the entrance
Just Trees for the free trees
Hans Hettasch for his technical assistance with marking out the stands.

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COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

It's a small world

Stuart Booker
Events & Marketing Manager
Commercial Horticultural Association - United Kingdom

One of the greatest things about the horticultural industry is the commitment and passion that is generated amongst its community. And the worldwide horticultural industry is a close community, as we so often find. "It's a small world" is a regular comment heard amongst members of our industry as we travel to various trade shows, presentations, seminars and exhibitions across the globe.

The same can be said when we met Mike Carter of Elands Nursery, Uitenhage early this year. Mike, was attending the GAN Trade Show in Dorset, UK. As he gave us a potted history of his background in both South Africa and the UK, it was uncanny how many people, nurseries, companies and parts of the world that we had in common.

As a relative newcomer to the industry, I personally always feel it refreshing to see the passion and vigour displayed in all layers of our industry. It is therefore always a pleasure to create an opportunity from where we can all benefit - and I thank Mike

for this opportunity.

The Commercial Horticultural Association represents the interests of UK manufacturers and suppliers of plants, products and services to commercial horticultural growers throughout the world. Our Members provide a huge range of products and services, from irrigation to insect netting, cut flowers to crop covers, glasshouses to growing media and so on.

A key element of our role is to link our Members up with international growers and nurseries. As such, we organise the UK Pavilions at various international events throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Many of our Members

have a presence throughout these areas and further afield, and we as a Trade Association are always delighted to take enquiries and point interested parties in the direction of a company or service provider who can help.

If you feel you could benefit from the services of any of our Members, please visit our website at www.cha-hort.com.

JAPANESE GARDEN CENTRE VISIT

Nick Stodel

It was my honour to be invited by the Japanese Garden Centre Association to visit their garden centers and gain a better understanding of their industry. Japan has had a very long history of gardening, dating back hundreds of years. Gardening has been a past time for many years in Japan, with the first shops dedicated to supplying wealthy Japanese with garden equipment and plants dating back over 400 years. The Shoguns were very influential in promoting the benefits of gardening for aesthetic reasons.

For that reason I was very interested to find out how small their gardening industry was compared to that of other countries I had visited. I was to find out that while Japan has a long history of gardening, the industry itself was wiped out with the industrial revolution and then World War 2. The result was that many Japanese still gardened, however the industry itself was virtually none existent. Garden Centers and the ready availability of gardening products and material are only about 15 years old, but like with most aspects of Japanese life, a very organised and structured means was created to grow the industry through Retail and Growing Associations. At least two countries a year were visited in North America and Europe

and the ideas seen in those countries were taken back to Japan and implemented.

The gardening industry in Japan grew tremendously in the 1990's and the first large scale Garden Specialty store was opened in 1994. From 1997-2000 there was a huge over-production of plants on the market and the price of plants fell drastically. This made gardening more open to the general population, but gave the industry some interesting challenges. It was then that the associations grew strong and the growers more organised.

We visited 3 garden centers and I was impressed with the way in which they catered for what is their biggest market, container gardening. Each plant was carefully presented to make it easy for customers to find a pot and plant combination. Their selection of indoor plants was very impressive, and their orchids were incredible. I think that one



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could have a tour just on orchids.

There was a lot of talk in Japan about the "Greenwash" – the fact that everybody uses the word Green, but that it doesn't mean anything. This is a problem the Japanese local industry is trying to overcome using various initiatives.

Talk from other countries was that of the Green City initiatives. It is a marketing campaign that promotes green spaces by doing community projects under the Green City logo. Garden Centers need to fulfil certain criteria to use the logo for their marketing. Australia has an amazing new initiative where some local garden centers have paid to have virtual tours of their garden centers done. Check it out at www.ngiv.com.au/virtualtour.

The International Garden Centre Association will be visiting the UK from the 13th – 19th Sept 2009. They have instituted a student rate where anybody under 40 years old is able to get a much reduced price and it will be structured like a study tour. <http://www.igcacongress.com>.

A VISIT TO PROTEAFLOA AUSTRALIA

Inus Mostert
 Arnelia Proteas

receiving training and looking at various aspects related to the wholesale production of Proteaceae.

Why spend time at an Australian company who grows mainly South African, and to a lesser extent, Australian Proteaceae, one might wonder? The answer is quite simple: Proteaflora is the world leader in the wholesale production of Proteaceae in containers and have collaboration agreements with various wholesale nurseries across the world, amongst others Arnelia Proteas in South Africa. Proteaflora has won three consecutive awards, from 2005 to 2007, as the best wholesale production nursery in Australia.

In my time there I noticed and became aware of a few things related to their nursery industry and other aspects of Australian life, which are different to what we are accustomed to here in SA and I want to highlight a few of these differences.

Cost and efficiency of labour:
 The average rate per hour per general worker is around A\$10, which isn't cheap by any one's standards! Proteaflora employs approximately 15 people in the production side of the business and this workforce is responsible for approximately 300,000 14cm container plants per 15-month cycle. I was shocked to see only 2 people in the nursery (the rest busy with propagation and dispatching orders) while at Arnelia we would have between 10 and 20 staff during summer in the nursery. How do they manage with such a small workforce I wondered? The answers became apparent as the days went by: a skilled and competent workforce, a management system on computer that every worker is able to access and capture their days activities on, mechanisation, years of trials with amongst others herbicides to have a virtually weed free nursery, just to name a few.

Pot standardisation:
 It was interesting to hear that the different size plastic pots in use throughout the Australian nursery industry, is standardised. This makes a lot

of sense, from the manufacturer's point of view through to the retailer.

Distribution companies:
 Various plant distribution companies exist in the State of Victoria alone and their function is to collect the product from various wholesalers in a particular area ordered by the retailers, take it to the company's distribution centre, consolidate the plants from the various wholesalers for a specific retailer and deliver the retailers order. Proteaflora has a choice of at least 2 different distribution companies in the Monbulk area where the nursery is based. This makes the lives of the wholesalers a lot easier for reasons that should be obvious.

Potting mixes:
 Proteaflora, and other wholesalers, are privileged to have a potting "soil" company nearby who works closely with the various wholesalers according to their potting mix requirements. The company providing the pot mixes will analyze each batch of bark mixture which Proteaflora uses, obtain the controlled released fertilizers from the manufacturers, as prescribed by Proteaflora, blend in the fertilizers, lime and a certain percentage of sand according to Proteaflora's needs. After each delivery Proteaflora will then do their own analysis of the potting mix and reject a batch if not meeting their standards, which the potting soil company has to collect at their own cost. At Arnelia we also use bark as our potting medium, which comes from the Southern Cape. Whereas Proteaflora is able to receive a ready-to-use potting mix within a day after ordering, at Arnelia we have to order a month in advance to be on the safe side and then perform our own blending of the necessary fertilizers and lime before it's ready to use.

Anova pot:
 Imagine my surprise and disbelief when seeing a 14cm plastic pot in use by Proteaflora called the Anova pot, which has one large, sieve-like drainage hole right in the centre of the pot at the bottom – no drainage holes at the sides! There is an edge on the inside of the pot, around the hole, which causes excess water to be retained at the bottom of the pot and re-absorbed later in the day as the potting mix starts drying. When this



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concept appeared in Australia, Proteaflora was the first nursery to embrace this idea, while other growers were sceptical. The advantage of this pot is that an irrigation cycle sufficient to wet an Anova pot will not wet a standard 14cm pot enough to see it through a warm day. This equates to a water saving ability of ± 10%.

Water – a scarce commodity in Oz:
 Proteaflora relies on rain, borehole and creek water for production. In Victoria any new nursery must recycle irrigation water, as must any nursery using mains water. Irrigation water shouldn't soak away or run off, which means that the watered areas must be sealed and all excess water collected. There are guidelines in place also for rainwater collection. New South Wales and Western Australia have similar laws, but states with more water aren't so concerned. Because water is a scarce commodity in SA as well, we can learn a lot from our Wallaby neighbours in this regard. Andrew and Sue Matthews, who I stayed with, rely entirely on rainwater for their household use!

I was able to visit an indigenous retail nursery near Proteaflora. I was amazed to see the many genera on offer like Banksia, Telopia, Grevillia, Eucalyptus, Syzgium just to name a few, the many species / varieties within a specific genus (50 different Eucalyptus species on a quick count) and no plants in plastic bags, all in pots. The reason why plastic bags aren't used much in Australia is that it makes machine potting very difficult.

It was a very informative visit for me making me aware of how much more effort we as wholesalers in SA have to put into growing and getting our product out to the retailers, compared to our Australian counterparts.

Lastly, did you know that Australia has ± 650 species of Eucalyptus?