

# Your Levy At Work



Greenlife Industry Australia

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## Big Leaf Wholesale Nursery building a legacy of sustainability through NIASA accreditation

At Big Leaf Wholesale Nursery, commitment to resilient management practices is more than a checklist, it's a core philosophy.

With the industry facing ongoing biosecurity challenges and an increased demand for the implementation of sustainable practices, Kieran Studders and his team recognise that the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) provides a crucial framework to futureproof their business.

Big Leaf operates on a 4.2 hectares site with over 12,000 square meters under irrigation, producing plants for retail and wholesale nurseries, landscapers, florists and developers. Led by Kieran and his business partner Greg Philpott, the nursery's journey to NIASA accreditation has strengthened its operations, environmental stewardship and staff development.

Kieran's journey into horticulture began in 1981 with a certification in Urban Horticulture. With over 40 years of experience in the greenlife industry, he spent over two decades in landscaping and arboriculture before transitioning to the nursery industry.

With guidance from Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) extension officers, Big Leaf has embraced change and elevated its operations to create lasting value for its team and clients.

As the business prepares for sale, NIASA accreditation not only reflects Big Leaf's high standards but adds value, showcasing a resilient operation grounded in environmental responsibility and ethical production.

### **The role of NIASA**

NIASA provides a structured approach to best management practices (BMP) for production nurseries.

Under the scheme, accredited businesses adhere to national BMP guidelines, which cover everything from crop hygiene to water management, enhancing operational efficiency and reducing pest and disease risks.

In recent years, biosecurity issues have increasingly threatened growers, with the potential to impact long-term sustainability. Recognising this, Big Leaf has taken proactive steps to safeguard its operations by implementing a range of best practice strategies.

As Kieran explains, NIASA has provided a roadmap for sustainable growth and resilience in the face of emerging biosecurity challenges.

"We began by retrofitting the nursery to improve our irrigation, drainage and electricity management. This transformation included a shift to treated bore water for all irrigation needs, significantly reducing the nursery environmental footprint and enhancing resource efficiency," Kieran said.

A cornerstone of Big Leaf's accreditation journey was the implementation of integrated pest management (IMP) practices. By using biological controls, Big Leaf minimised its reliance on chemical treatments, reducing its pest and disease issues and supporting the health of both crops and staff.

"Our pest control practices are more targeted, relying on predators to manage insect populations, which aligns with our commitment to environmental stewardship and ethical production practices."

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## **GIA extension officers' support for continuous improvement**

Kieran said that support from GIA Extension Officer, Barry Naylor provided invaluable insights during the improvements, helping the nursery prioritise critical issues and optimising operations.

“The input from Barry and the extension officer network has been important. Not only has it helped us achieve NIASA accreditation, but it has also instilled a culture of continuous improvement,” said Kieran.

“Accreditation has allowed us to formalise our commitment to our values. It's about more than meeting standards, it's about building a resilient business that clients can trust.

“With accreditation in place, we have seen reduced stock losses, improved pest management and implemented a

more streamlined approach to resource use, all of which contribute to the bottom line.

As Big Leaf prepares for a potential sale, Kieran sees NIASA accreditation as an asset, enhancing the nursery's appeal to buyers.

“Accreditation gives potential buyers confidence that they're purchasing a business with a strong operational foundation and a commitment to industry standards.

“It not only supports productivity now but also underscores Big Leaf's long-term sustainability and value in the marketplace.”

For more information about NIASA accreditation contact Greenlife Industry Australia at [info@greenlifeindustry.com.au](mailto:info@greenlifeindustry.com.au) or 1300 95 95 13.

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