

# Your Levy At Work



Greenlife Industry Australia

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**FEBRUARY 2025**

## 110 years of progress at Yarralumla Nursery

For over 110 years, plants from Yarralumla Nursery have been at the heart of Canberra's suburban landscapes, providing high-quality stock that shape the region's green spaces.

As one of the oldest nurseries in Australia, it has consistently delivered excellence—not just in its products but also in its practices—by embedding Best Management Practices (BMP) into its operations.

Commitment to advancement and environmental stewardship has positioned the nursery as a leader in the horticulture industry.

Operating on a 10-hectare site with a team of 30 dedicated staff, Yarralumla Nursery supplies plants to landscape contractors, retail and wholesale nurseries, district councils, government directorates, and provides contract growing services for the nursery industry. It also collaborates with organisations such as not-for-profits, and schools, as well as providing the Free Plant Issue to help establish the new suburbs of Canberra.

Over time, the nursery has evolved to meet the changing needs of the community. Historically focused on greening Canberra's suburbs, Yarralumla Nursery shifted its focus to wholesale landscapers in the mid-1990s, aligning its operations with market demands.

Today, its success is guided by the leadership of Senior Director Dr Matthew Parker and Production Operations Manager Ms Belinda Ryan, who bring the teams shared vision to the business:

"Our mission is clear: to be a thriving and innovative nursery respected for the excellence of our products," said Matthew.

"We're driven by values like integrity, collaboration, and sustainability, which guide every decision we make."

### Path to best practice

The journey towards embedding BMP began in 2015 with Yarralumla Nursery's first Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA) audit. According to Matthew this provided a roadmap for improvement and highlighted areas where the nursery could align its operations with industry-leading standards. By 2017, significant upgrades had been implemented, including improved growing surfaces, enhanced record-keeping, and more efficient irrigation systems.

"We undertook our first NIASA audit to understand best industry practices and how our practices could be improved. This helped to prioritise funding to strategically make improvements to achieve accreditation, such as covering our soil bays" says Belinda.

"Since then, we've increased our drip irrigation coverage across our tree growing areas, and streamlined our spray irrigation by changing heads and reviewing coverage, which has significantly reduced water wastage and improved efficiency.

"It wasn't an overnight change—we started with a small trial area and gradually expanded as we saw the benefits. The whole process really transformed how we approach sustainability and resource management."

In 2019, Yarralumla Nursery commenced the process to install a water treatment facility that will improve water quality and prevent pests and diseases.

### The Yarralumla point of difference

The integration of best practices has spurred significant advancements across the nursery's operations. Improvements to propagation facilities, the introduction of automated systems, and the adoption of innovative

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growing substrates have boosted plant health and operational efficiency.

“These changes have revolutionised the way we work,” said Belinda.

“Improved drainage and hygiene have reduced pest and disease outbreaks, while consistent irrigation schedules have led to healthier, more resilient plants. Seeing these results is incredibly motivating for our staff.”

Achieving third-party credentials, such as NIASA accreditation, will further reinforce the nursery’s reputation. “Our accreditation will be a point of difference,” said Matthew.

“It will demonstrate to clients that we operate at the highest industry standards, which builds confidence and opens doors to new opportunities. Internally, these best practices have streamlined processes and improved staff satisfaction, positioning us as a trusted leader in the greenlife industry.”

### **A framework for the future**

The journey has not been without challenges. Balancing the upfront costs of implementing cutting-edge solutions while maintaining heritage integrity, with the need to remain competitive in the market has tested the nursery’s resilience.

“Every improvement we make comes with an upfront cost, but the long-term benefits far outweigh the challenges,” said Matthew.

“It’s about staying ahead of the curve and ensuring we remain competitive.”

Looking ahead, Yarralumla Nursery plans to finalise NIASA accreditation, pursue additional certifications, and invest in advanced technologies to further enhance productivity and quality.

“In five to ten years, we see Yarralumla Nursery as a beacon of excellence in the industry,” said Belinda.

“We aim to be recognised not just for the quality of our plants, but for the sustainable practices and community responsibility that underpin everything we do.”

Through its commitment to continual improvement Yarralumla Nursery is ensuring its long-term success while making a lasting impact on Canberra and surrounding communities.

“Best practices aren’t just a framework—they’re a mindset,” said Matthew.

“At Yarralumla Nursery, BMP drive everything we do, ensuring we’re always growing and improving.”

For more information on accreditation and certification, visit [greenlifeindustry.com.au/credentials](https://greenlifeindustry.com.au/credentials)

In addition, if you’re interested in exploring NIASA certification, visit [nurseryproductionfms.com.au](https://nurseryproductionfms.com.au) or contact Greenlife Industry Australia at [info@greenlifeindustry.com.au](mailto:info@greenlifeindustry.com.au) or on 1300 95 95 13.

### **ENDS**

*Funded by Hort Innovation under the ‘National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program’ (NY20001), the nationally mobilised network of extension officers engages with production nurseries now in every Australian state or territory to improve plant protection protocols and production outcomes across the country.*