

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND IRRIGATION FUTURES SEQ-IF

Rural Water Use Efficiency
For South East Queensland



OPERATING UNDER THE NURSERY PRODUCTION FARM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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purchased the nursery.*

*Participation in the
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Gil Hebrard 25.02.2010

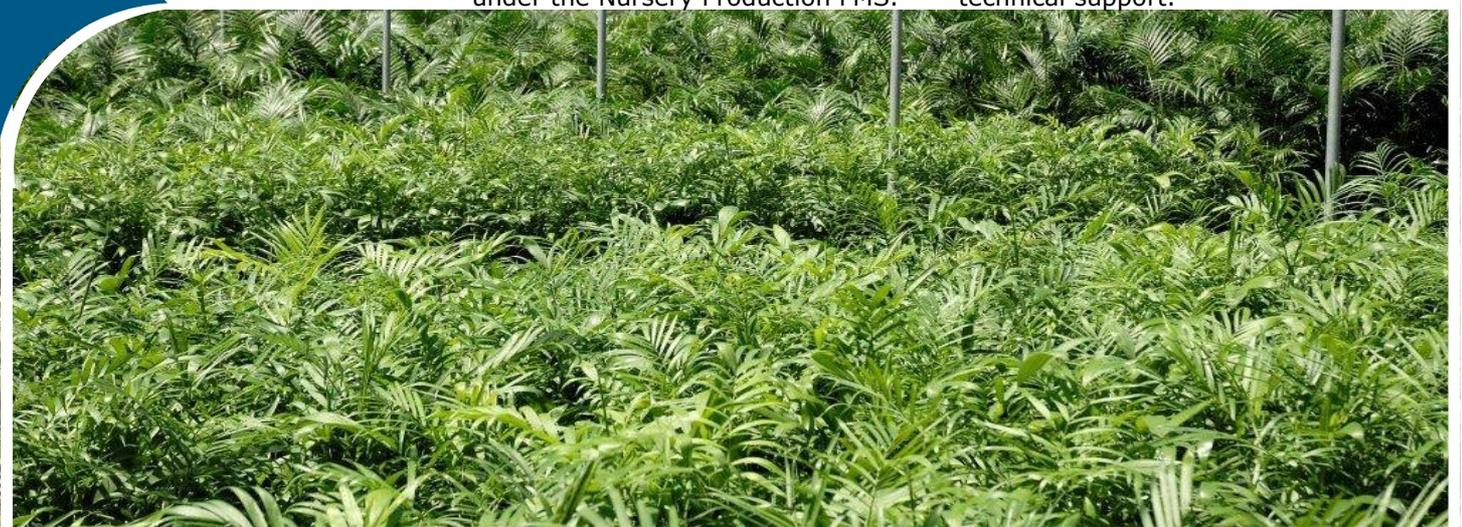
Tropical Exotics nursery is located at Ningi north of Brisbane and is owned by Gil & Teena Hebrard. The nursery produces a range of container plants designed for interior use, and are sold and marketed through retailers, wholesalers and plant hire companies along the east coast of Australia. Fifty percent of the Tropical Exotics container plant sales are to interstate customers.

Tropical Exotics reputation for quality is based around the production of a range of palms including rhaps, kentia, golden cane, seifrizii, and parlour palms along with pothos totems and a selection of aglaonema, spathiphyllum, ficus varieties.

The nursery was built around 1982 and purchased from the original owners by Gil and Teena in November 2003 and since that time the nursery has expanded its main production areas by 8% in 2008 and again in 2009. The nursery was an accredited nursery facility when purchased and has since also received formal EcoHort certification under the Nursery Production FMS.

The nursery operates with owners Gil and Teena responsible for all management decisions, planning, budgeting and policy making, and they are extremely well supported by 2 full time and one casual employee.

The BMP programs NIASA and EcoHort under the Nursery Production Farm Management System have provided Gil and Teena with valuable information and clear guidelines appropriate to their business. The regular onsite assessments of the FMS programs by technical field officers provide the necessary support to the business. During a field day at Tropical Exotics in February 2010, Gil Hebrard remarked ‘We have achieved great results since we purchased the nursery. Participation in the NIASA accreditation scheme has had a major impact on these results’. Having limited experience in growing plants commercially, Gil and Teena have relied heavily on the support provided by the FMS program and the associated technical support.





A number of recent initiatives have been implemented under the FMS program to help maintain the finest quality nursery product at Tropical Exotics. The nursery has installed a programmed maintenance plan for all growing beds, increased the space available to each growing container, implemented measures to ensure the regular grading and detailing of nursery stock, established weekly pest and disease checks and commenced regular nursery walk throughs.

Tropical Exotics is located north of Brisbane at Ningi and sits on a 5 acre parcel of land. The improvements onsite consist of 2 large shade houses, one glasshouse and a growing tunnel combining to provide a little over 9,000 square metres of growing area. The nursery holds approximately 150,000 containerised plants, the majority grown in 20, 25 and 30cm containers under 70 to 80% shade. The quality nursery stock is produced from seed, seedlings, tissue culture and cuttings. The bulk of this propagation is conducted onsite whenever possible, however material that is purchased and brought onsite is managed through quarantine processes outlined in the NIASA guidelines.

Growing media utilised throughout the nursery was originally formulated onsite when the nursery was purchased in 2003. The decision to purchase 'ready made' growing media soon followed, along with the progress to a soilless mix. Numerous changes to the growing media has continued to occur to enhance the characteristics of the media.

Nursery irrigation water is sourced from four deep bores on the nursery property and pumped into a 45,000 litre above ground holding tank in preparation for use. The original bore pumps are gradually being replaced with new efficient and reliable submersible pump systems. The sprinkler irrigation system has also been systematically upgraded and the original sprinklers have been replaced with more efficient and reliable John Deere (Plastro) rondo inverted sprinklers that operate to industry bmp parameters. A drip irrigation system has been installed in some growing areas that have proven difficult to irrigate with overhead sprinkler systems due to location, obstacles or height restrictions. The drip irrigation system has also delivered a significant reduction in water use. These changes to the irrigation system along with improvements in irrigation scheduling, increased water storage and irrigation water distribution upgrades has improved the total water use efficiency at Tropical Exotics.

Wastewater drains have been constructed to capture any irrigation runoff along with rain events and are designed to direct all water to a central area where it will be captured and stored for future reuse and recycling.

Tropical Exotics has increased sales substantially due largely to their enhanced nursery management and improved operational practices. Gil and Teena's recent focus has been to improve nursery hygiene, provide more space to each plant and install a system of plant grading and detailing designed to improve plant quality, reduce plant losses, reduce throwouts and lower costs. Gil Hebrard recently remarked "At present we have less containers on the ground at any given time, but our sales and profitability have improved".



"The advice and information received from the NGIQ technical field officers has been invaluable in improving all aspects of our business"

Gil Hebrard 25.02.2010

