



Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia

Case Study

For immediate release

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New nursery leaders nurtured in funded study programs

Three professional development programs for nursery employees are meeting the industry's goal of nurturing future innovators and young leaders, with the first students of the inaugural *Global Masterclass in Horticultural Business* set to graduate by the end of the year.

Three students selected from within the nursery industry have described the Masterclass offered through the University of Tasmania (UTAS) as 'unique', 'inspiring' and 'contributing to the awareness of horticulture's importance'.

The nursery industry will once again allocate \$30,000 worth of scholarship funding towards the Masterclass in 2018. Those that have a strong interest in, and passion for, building their skills and the industry's capacity are encouraged to apply before 12 November, 2017.

The course runs alongside the *Green Industry Growing Leaders* program, a multi-industry project involving 14 nursery and turf workers in a three-month leadership education course, and *Attracting New Entrants into Australian Horticulture*, which engages university graduates within the industry.

The three programs are designed to meet Outcome 5 of the Strategic Industry Plan 2017-21, which aims to provide better career development, promote the nursery industry as a professional career choice, identify future skill sets needed, and to use future innovators and young leaders to promote and adopt research and development and marketing outcomes.

For James Edge from Humphris Nursery in Victoria, studying for the Masterclass in Horticultural Business has meant he's been able to apply his new learnings in the workplace immediately.



James Edge, Humphris Nurseries (VIC).

"All credit to the three universities working collaboratively to deliver content in a way that I found very easy to retain, because I could put my learning into practice straight away and then it becomes second nature," James said.

"It covers off on quite a broad range of topics such as management of budgets, finances, breakeven points, return on investments, business and marketing strategies,



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and really hones in on the horticultural aspects that are applicable at senior manager, supervisor and business development level.”

He’s also found it useful to ‘rub shoulders’ with others in the wider horticultural world.

“Our organisation is predominantly retail horticulture but in the Masterclass I’m networking with people from the broader industry, from large scale field-grown fruit and vegetables to micro herbs, which is very inspiring.

“I can bring back aspects of what these businesses have been doing to our category of horticulture and continuously improve our business and vice versa. We’ve all been exposed to a passionate group of individuals and can develop these relationships and networks for the future.”

Described as a mini-MBA, the Masterclass was developed as part of the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund, a strategic partnership initiative by Hort Innovation, with co-investment by University of Tasmania, Lincoln University, Wageningen Academy, and the Australian Government.

The nursery scholarships, valued at \$10,000 each, have been funded using research and development industry levies and contributions from the Australian Government.



Sonja Cameron, Cameron’s Nursery (NSW).

Sonja Cameron from Cameron’s Nursery in New South Wales says while she has been working in horticulture for many years, there was much to learn in the Masterclass that she could use to fine tune the business.

“Some areas like Human Resources (HR) I could tell you about in my sleep, but the theory still gave me more tools in my belt to look at things or talk to staff in a different way, and to think about ‘Have we been doing that right?’ or ‘I might change that’,” Sonja said.

“I think as horticulturalists we go off and learn about plants and vegetables and then we start running a business and supervising staff, when we haven’t been taught any of that. You might be doing 50, 60, 70 per cent of it right, but this course enables us to think about and question things and plug that gap.

“Sharing information with others who are sworn to confidentiality is also really helpful, so that you have an impartial person to run an eye over your business.”

Sonja said there was a good mix of topics in the course, from assessing personalities to marketing, HR, supply chain logistics, finance and global issues, and she intends to continue study to gain a Masters in Horticultural Business.



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Tasmanian recipient Heather Huxley from Horticultural and Landscape Supplies said the Masterclass offered a 'unique' opportunity, and she's been encouraging others to apply for scholarships in 2018.

"The lecturers at UTAS School of Agriculture know exactly how to relate our studies back to the industry," Heather said.

"The Masterclass has covered all the different aspects of business that I've never had to look at in 30 years in the sector. For example, we're currently studying innovation and entrepreneurship which is really mind opening."

With Hort Innovation offering another \$30,000 in funding for applicants to the 2018 Masterclass in Horticultural Business, she's been quick to recommend it to others.

"It's a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills in a condensed course rather than ad hoc on the job, and it's been a huge confidence boost for me, knowing that I can now go out and apply for more senior jobs. It's already got me a promotion at work."

The three graduates join other nursery employees in the Green Industry Growing Leaders program and sponsored interns under the Attracting New Entrants into Australian Horticulture, in benefiting from targeted funding to promote leadership in nursery.

Growing Leaders aims to build the capabilities of the next generation of nursery and turf industry participants, to build a more positive workplace culture, boost business and ultimately, industry prosperity.

South Australian Hayley Whitehorn, sales manager at Poplar Grove Wholesale Nursery, says she's been able to implement change immediately, using new techniques to improve team work and retail interaction.

As part of the program, participants develop a workplace project showcasing why and how they would apply the principles acquired in the program to their businesses.

"I was particularly interested in learning how to communicate and engage with different team members and retail customers, through more effective dialogue and body language," Hayley explained.



Hayley Whitehorn, Poplar Grove Wholesale Nursery (SA).

"For instance, we introduced staff meetings as a way of encouraging employees to be involved not just at the technical level but at a strategic one too, and that helps to build real momentum towards meeting customer orders and giving excellent service."

Executive assistant at Australian Fresh Leaf Herbs, Sharon Coutts, says she'd certainly recommend being part of the third leadership initiative launched in 2017 - Hort Innovation's pilot \$3.9 million internship program.



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Ms Coutts says the initiative is very worthwhile to attract young, progressive university students into horticulture.

More than 50 leading interns will be placed in horticultural businesses over the next five years to strengthen the industry and provide the next generation of employees.

“Our company’s managing director is a Nuffield Scholar and travelling overseas he saw the same thing again and again - an ageing industry that needs innovation and technology to supply a global population,” Ms Coutts said.

“As a young expanding company we are challenged in having more to do without necessarily having the resources to do it, so bringing in the right people in the right timeframe is critical.”

More information:

- [Click here](#) to find out more about the **Global Masterclass in Horticultural Business (LP15001)**. [Click here](#) to learn more about the 2018 scholarships and how to apply before 12 November, 2017.
- [Click here](#) to find out more about the **Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund** including the Global Masterclass in Horticultural Business (LP15001) and Attracting New Entrants into Australian Horticulture (LP15006).
- [Click here](#) to find out more about **Green Industry Growing Leaders (MT16002)**.

To find out more about the professional development opportunities for nursery industry stakeholders, visit: <http://horticulture.com.au/grower-focus/nursery/>

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