

New standard sets benchmark for tree quality

The trees we plant today need to endure and stand the test of time.

That's the message from Ken Bevan, the General Manager of Alpine Nurseries, one of the nation's largest wholesale nurseries located in New South Wales.

Operating from two locations across Sydney and one from Alstonville in Northern NSW, Alpine sells exclusively to landscape architects, designers and contractors; councils; property developers; garden centres and government agencies.

The business recently hosted the Sydney Tree Stock Roadshow, an event that brought together 120 greening and landscape professionals to learn about the updated standard, AS 2303:2018 *Tree Stock for Landscape Use*.

Speaking from their Dural site, Mr Bevan said the roadshow was an opportunity to highlight the importance of the updated standard as a yardstick for growers and buyers to assess tree quality.

"It's vital that trees have a long and successful life once they leave the nursery. The trees we plant today need to last for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren," Mr Bevan said.

"Our decision to host the roadshow was based on our involvement in this research project from the beginning, and the need to have a consistent tree standard that had national buy in from growers.



Prof Mark Tjoelker and Mr. Ken Bevan at the Sydney Roadshow, Alpine Nurseries, NSW.

"There was a view that the tree stock balance table was NSW-centric and lacked evidence of its efficacy, so assessing this measure and ensuring it was fit for purpose, was a critical step for our industry."

This assessment of the previous standard (AS 2303:2015) was realised through a three-year research project funded by Hort Innovation using nursery industry levies and funds from the Australian Government.

Led by the Western Sydney University Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment (HIE), the project involved a nationwide survey of 14,000 trees across 23 production nurseries, as well as rigorous data analysis.

Following extensive consultation with the production and landscape industries, the data collected by Western Sydney University HIE helped to inform the revision of the tree standard, the outcome of which was extended to growers via the roadshow.

Professor Mark Tjoelker from Western Sydney University HIE said the research team had made its way to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin and Sydney to deliver the positive news to industry.

"Our research found that the previous standard was too narrow in respect to the 'root to shoot' balance provisions of the standard," Prof Tjoelker said.

"The 'root to shoot' balance refers to the balance between the above ground portion of the tree and the rootball of the container in which the tree is grown in."

"The results suggest that otherwise conforming tree stock may have been restricted under the previous standard, due to a narrower range of that root to shoot balance, when in fact it was of acceptable quality."

Prof Tjoelker reiterated that the new standard provides a clear definition of what constitutes a quality tree, as well as simple tests to verify a quality tree.



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“There’s a real opportunity for growers to promote to clients that they are producing high-quality tree stock that is measured using the national standard,” Prof Tjoelker said.

“The standard provides that tick of approval – and is a great example of industry raising the bar.”



The Sydney Tree Stock Roadshow attracted 120 growers and landscape professionals.

Hort Innovation R&D Lead Dr Anthony Kachenko said the organisation invested in projects that facilitated practice change and cited the Tree Stock Standard as a prime example.

“The roadshows, which have attracted more than 450 people, have been the catalyst for practice change,” Dr Kachenko said.

“It was encouraging to see the number of roadshow participants who have actively sought out information on the new standard to implement in their businesses and to ultimately drive greener communities.

“The standard ensures that high quality tree stock is being supplied, that trees will last, and contribute to healthy, liveable cities now and into the future.”

Purchase the new AS 2303:2018 Tree Stock for Landscape Use [here](#).

Watch the video [here](#).

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