

A state of concern for breeders

Bywong Nursery, Bywong NSW

The Ollerenshaws have a thriving business in breeding new varieties of native plants for Australia's wholesale nurseries. However, not every state shares their enthusiasm.

Peter Ollerenshaw and his wife Jennifer have owned and operated Bywong Nursery for just over 20 years.

Located 30 kilometres north-east of Canberra, Bywong specialises in growing tube stock and also conducts its own breeding and plant development, notably in native plants.

Peter is one of only a handful of growers in Australia who works specifically in breeding new native plants.

"People have come back to natives," says Peter. "I think that is a reaction to a number of factors but high on the list will be the drought."

Besides selling his product locally and throughout NSW, Bywong ships its tube stock to wholesale nurseries in all states, though Peter has an alternate plan for the future.

"Shipping is an expensive operation," says Peter.

"We'd prefer our customers do their own growing of our species under licence and we retain the intellectual rights.

"Shipping our plants to WA, for example, is a huge bother."

WA says do it our way

Any grower who wants to ship plants to Western Australia has to meet stringent entry and quarantine requirements under the Interstate Certification Assurance system.

ICA is a system of plant health certification with a basis of operational procedures developed by each state's Department of Agriculture (or equivalent) in conjunction with quarantine authorities.

In its strictest form, ICA applies quarantine restrictions to the movement of a range of goods into Western Australia from other states and territories.

For example, ICA-29 – a tome dictating the terms for the Treatment of Nursery Stock to WA – runs to 39 pages of text, charts and legal requirements.

The ICA-29 requirements are reviewed and expanded regularly, and from Peter's point of view this makes doing business with WA increasingly complex.

"I think some years back they discovered Flower Thrips in some shipped plants and they theoretically closed down the shutters," he explains.



"Since then the entry regulations have become more stringent and they change continually. Every state faces the same problems when shipping to WA, and to a lesser extent to Tasmania."

Scotts meets WA approval

Bywong, like other nurseries, can only ship in plants that are on the WA permitted schedule. Additionally, those plants must have been drenched with a specific schedule of insecticides and fungicides.

Fortunately, a number of Scotts products meet the schedule.

"We use Banrot, Zyban, Crown and Procide anyhow," says Peter, "and they're on the WA approved list for drenching."

Peter knows that many growers have opted out of shipping to WA. "It's a lot of time and expense and it's hard to justify on the cost of the plant."

Two new arrivals

Bywong developed and recently launched two new varieties of Grevillea called Lady O and Fireworks.

"We've created these as smaller shrubs to suit smaller home blocks and a shortage of water," says Peter, explaining their development rationale.

"They're heavy flowering and are particularly attractive in pots, and the bright, new colours will do well with customers."

Being new plant varieties these Grevilleas won't yet be on the WA approved list. But Peter is still keen to continue relations with his WA customers.

"By staying in touch with WA we may be able to establish more growing licences. That's good for business."