

Your Levy At Work



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Zero disease outbreaks in nine months: how Azalea Grove Nursery strengthened water management

At a glance

Who this is for

Nursery businesses looking to strengthen biosecurity, improve operational systems and build greater confidence in water management, monitoring and traceability.

Why it matters

As expectations around plant health, traceability and risk management continue to rise, nurseries need strong, reliable operational systems. Azalea Grove Nursery's experience shows how BioSecure HACCP can help identify risks, strengthen Best Management Practices and improve operational confidence through better monitoring, documentation and continuous improvement.

When recurring disease issues emerged during extreme weather events, Queensland wholesale producer Azalea Grove Nursery knew it was time to take a closer look at one of the nursery's most critical operational systems - water management.

Originally established in 1961, Azalea Grove Nursery supplies a broad range of plants to wholesale, retail, landscaping, government and council sectors across Queensland and New South Wales.

Already operating water disinfestation systems across the business, the nursery wanted greater confidence that treatment processes were performing consistently at key times across the nursery particularly during prolonged rainfall and humid conditions.

[BioSecure HACCP](#) provided the catalyst for a deeper operational review.

"It was really about strengthening the business long term," said Melanie Gimpel, owner and operator of Azalea Grove Nursery.

"The nursery industry is becoming more focused on traceability, biosecurity and risk management, and we wanted to make sure Azalea Grove stayed ahead of that curve."

Reviewing the water disinfestation system

As part of routine monitoring, the nursery regularly tests water storage systems for bacteria and pathogens. Over time, the business identified recurring Anthracnose issues in Ixora varieties during extended wet and humid periods.

"Water management was probably the biggest area we knew needed closer review," Melanie said.

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This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

“We already had disinfestation systems in place, but the accreditation process pushed us to look deeper into how effective and consistent those systems really were across the whole nursery.”

A key early intervention was increasing water storage capacity by approximately 120,000 litres, improving chlorine contact time before water moved through the irrigation system.

To further strengthen system confidence, the nursery also introduced multiple chlorine testing points across the site, including at the furthest watering points, to verify chlorine levels remained effective throughout the entire irrigation network.

While existing systems were already treating irrigation water, the BioSecure HACCP process highlighted opportunities to improve chlorine contact time, storage capacity and monitoring procedures throughout the nursery.

With support from the Australian Plant Production Standard (APPS) program and levy-funded GrowConnex, the business undertook a detailed review of its water treatment processes.

“The APPS resources and GrowConnex support helped provide structure and guidance throughout the review process,” Melanie said.

“It encouraged us to look more closely at critical control points within the nursery and helped identify opportunities for improvement that we might have missed.”

Operational improvements delivering results

Since upgrading its water treatment system and strengthening monitoring procedures more than nine months ago, Azalea Grove Nursery has recorded no major bacterial disease outbreaks linked to its irrigation system.

Additional monitoring, testing and record keeping procedures were implemented to strengthen traceability, improve consistency and support auditing requirements.

“The improvements have provided far greater confidence in water quality consistency, reduced production risk during extreme weather conditions, and strengthened overall plant health management across the nursery,” Melanie said.

“The process reinforced the importance of monitoring and verifying critical control points throughout the operation rather than relying on assumptions that systems are performing effectively.”

A proactive response to increasing industry expectations

As customer expectations around plant health, traceability and biosecurity continue to grow, the business saw BioSecure HACCP as an opportunity to strengthen operational systems and future-proof the nursery for evolving market requirements.

The accreditation process encouraged the team to closely examine critical control points across the business, particularly water treatment, monitoring and documentation procedures.

Beyond accreditation

For Azalea Grove Nursery, the value of BioSecure HACCP extends well beyond accreditation itself.

The process prompted broader operational improvements across the business, including stronger documentation, improved monitoring procedures, greater staff awareness and a more proactive approach to risk management.

"It's helped strengthen systems across the nursery and reinforced the importance of monitoring, documentation and continuous improvement within the business," Melanie said.

The accreditation has also strengthened confidence among customers and auditors by demonstrating the nursery's commitment to high standards around biosecurity, plant health and operational management.

"I'd encourage other nurseries to view BioSecure HACCP as more than just an accreditation process," Melanie said.

"If approached properly, it becomes an opportunity to review and strengthen the entire operation while helping future-proof the business for changing industry expectations."

For more information on accreditation and credentials, please contact the GrowConnex experts: www.greenlifeindustry.org.au/talk-to-an-expert.

The 'Nursery sustainable plant production and biosecurity preparedness project' (BY24004), funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery levy and matched by the Australian Government, is a horticulture initiative designed to support nurseries in strengthening biosecurity and sustainable production practices.

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