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# Urban Tree Growers: budding business success with levy funded Lean Leaders

Driven by a philosophy of quality, community connection, and sustainability, Urban Tree Growers has stayed true to these values since its founding 25 years ago in Gippsland as a family-owned nursery.

Specialising in deciduous trees ranging from 40 cm to 100 litre bags, the family-owned specialty nursery produces around 3,000 trees annually for private gardens, streetscapes, and public spaces. For the past five years, Beth and Chris Dunne have overseen the nursery’s operations and client relationships, supported by a small team of three.

“We’re passionate about what we do, and we want to share that with the community, ensuring our systems support our people and our customers. It’s about making sure the business grows as well as the plants we deliver,” Beth said.

Urban Tree Growers faced challenges typical for small, boutique nurseries: clarifying team roles, preparing for the retirement of a long-term team member, and streamlining operations to sustain growth. Having previously worked with Moshie, Beth recognised the potential of the levy-funded Moshie National Lean Leaders Program (MT22011) to help her team build leadership and operational skills while driving tangible business improvements.

“I was looking for a way to strengthen our systems and confidence in how we work, especially with Tony - one of our team - retiring after 20 years. We wanted practical tools to manage transitions, clarify roles, and improve our processes so we could continue delivering high-quality plants to our clients and maintain a happy, confident team,” Beth said.

**What is the Lean Leaders Program?**

The Moshie National Lean Leaders Program (MT22011) is a levy-funded initiative designed specifically for horticultural businesses, including turf producers. The program delivers 10 x four-hour workshops over 20 weeks, equipping participants with tools and leadership skills to lead continuous improvement in their workplace. Fully funded positions are offered annually to turf levy-paying businesses, providing practical, hands-on learning to strengthen operations, leadership, and business performance.

Over 20 weeks, Beth participated in 10 interactive workshops delivered fortnightly in person. The program focused on practical application, helping the nursery tackle role clarity and succession planning by developing position descriptions, streamline order processing and inventory management, and implement internal communication strategies to improve alignment and accountability.

“The community Moshie created was invaluable. Seeing how others approached similar challenges, learning from their experiences, and having the guidance to apply it in our own business gave us the confidence to make meaningful changes on site. It wasn’t just about process; it was about understanding how to lead the team and improve our operations in a way that felt realistic for our small business.”

**Results**

The Moshie National Lean Leaders Program delivered tangible benefits for Urban Tree Growers:

* Operational improvements: streamlined order and inventory processes, giving a clearer overview of stock and planning needs.
* Business outcomes: on average, five additional sales per year, equating to approximately $30,000.
* Team development: strengthened confidence, role clarity, and engagement within the team, supporting smoother transitions and future growth.
* Strategic focus: clearer business priorities and a framework for maintaining momentum, including an action tracker to keep goals on track.

“Without the program, we wouldn’t have had the structure or confidence to tackle succession and process improvement so effectively. It’s given us clarity on where we’re headed as a business and how to support our team along the way.”

“It’s practical, straightforward, and provides tools you can use immediately. The biggest insight is hearing from others, you don’t know what you don’t know.

“Being open to learning, adapting, and applying those ideas will lead to real improvement.”

Looking ahead, Urban Tree Growers plans to maintain momentum by tracking actions, communicating progress to the team, and continuing to build relationships with the local community and developers. Beth is committed to growing the business while staying true to their passion for horticulture and supporting a greener future.

“Having something we believe in and sharing that with the community is incredibly rewarding.

“The Lean Leaders Program has helped us make sure our systems back up that passion and give us confidence for the future,” Beth said.

**ENDS**

*The ‘Horticulture National Lean Leaders Program’ (MT22011), funded by Hort Innovation, is a leadership initiative developed specifically for the horticultural industry. The program helps participants learn how to lead and sustain continuous improvement in their workplace.*

