

Question Box[®]

An open forum, in the spirit of Seeking and Sharing, for all participants to respond to and discuss the written questions submitted during the Conference on any subject.

When is the best time to take *Pittosporum* and *Metrosideros* cuttings?

Pittosporum: Half-ripe terminated wood, mostly April-June/July (mid-autumn to mid-winter)

Metrosideros: Half-ripe terminated wood, mostly March into May (autumn)

Seradix™ 2 (Bayer Crop Science) (4-indol-3-ylbutyric acid 3 g·kg⁻¹) can be used but if in doubt go down to a lower strength.

Is there a biological control for damping off (*Fusarium* species) on seed trays?

Natural sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* species) can be placed on top of the media with seed sown into the moss. For larger seed, gravel chip may be better.

Trichoderma species are available in a range of commercial products that can be incorporated in to the media.

Has anyone had problems with nematode infestation of *Astelia chathamica* ‘Silver Spear’ and *A. nervosa* ‘Westland’? This shows symptoms of rotting in the centre of the crown.

A few people have seen spasmodic problems; however no real solutions were put forward. If anyone has any suggestions please email Ann Fair, Naturally Native New Zealand Plants, Tauranga.

The assessment of apprenticeships is currently carried out by those employing them. Is there any move by the Horticultural Industry Training Organisation (HITO) to change that?

This opened up a discussion on horticultural training. Points discussed included: HITO would like students to be able to go to one of the Centre of Excellence training schools.

Roving assessors are not as widely available or as accessible as they say they are.

It is not always ideal to assess people you work with and who you have also taught.

How are the assessors themselves going to be assessed?

Moderation is a concern, and HITO is working to address this. Trainees need to pass because they have earned it and deserve to, not because the system says so. The recognition of prior learning is available for those people who have already worked in the industry; however the cost is not user friendly and this must be looked at. The cost could be as much as \$1000.

Chris Hughes as HITO board member representing the Nursery and Garden Industry Association noted these comments and will investigate further.

How do you propagate weeping myrtle (*Syzygium floribundum*)?

Young stock is preferable, but it is a difficult species and perseverance is called for. Grafting may offer the best success.

How do you put in successful applications to Department of Conservation (DOC) for seed collecting?

Not an easy question to answer. DOC appears to have trouble realising the difference between commercial and noncommercial (e.g., revegetation) programmes. They should readily give permits for seed collecting for noncommercial projects. However, at the same time we need to continue to push the need to allow seed collection for commercial purposes to keep native plant species alive and growing. If native species are not helped by nursery propagation then we could end up without them at all.

Where can you buy sieves for seed sifting?

Otago Wireworks in Dunedin.

Where can you purchase Seradix™ (Bayer Crop Science) (4-indol-3-ylbutyric acid) in the strengths not available?

This product range is only available in some strengths. However, you can make your own, and Jeff Elliot gave a paper on this subject at the 2002 New Zealand Conference, which is in Volume 52 of the I.P.P.S. Combined Proceedings.