

Should I grow wildflowers? information kit

Reprint – information current in 2000



REPRINT INFORMATION – PLEASE READ!

For updated information please call 13 25 23 or visit the website www.deedi.qld.gov.au

This publication has been reprinted as a digital book without any changes to the content published in 2000. We advise readers to take particular note of the areas most likely to be out-of-date and so requiring further research:

- Chemical recommendations—check with an agronomist or APVMA www.apvma.gov.au
- Financial information—costs and returns listed in this publication are out of date. Please contact an adviser or industry body to assist with identifying more current figures.
- Varieties—new varieties are likely to be available and some older varieties may no longer be recommended. Check with an agronomist, call the Business Information Centre on 13 25 23, visit our website www.deedi.qld.gov.au or contact the industry body.
- Contacts—many of the contact details may have changed and there could be several new contacts available. The industry organisation may be able to assist you to find the information or services you require.
- Organisation names—most government agencies referred to in this publication have had name changes. Contact the Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 or the industry organisation to find out the current name and contact details for these agencies.
- Additional information—many other sources of information are now available for each crop. Contact an agronomist, Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 or the industry organisation for other suggested reading.

Even with these limitations we believe this information kit provides important and valuable information for intending and existing growers.

This publication was last revised in 2000. The information is not current and the accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed by the State of Queensland.

This information has been made available to assist users to identify issues involved in wildflower production. This information is not to be used or relied upon by users for any purpose which may expose the user or any other person to loss or damage. Users should conduct their own inquiries and rely on their own independent professional advice.

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained in this publication.



Queensland Government

Other **CONSIDERATIONS**

Growing cut flowers is no longer a cottage industry; it requires a high level of professionalism to succeed. Growing cut flowers successfully is a business. All growers need to be conscious of the need to maintain the image of Australian-grown wildflowers, both at home and abroad, by providing consistent supplies of quality product to the market place.

Before you start, there are industry requirements that you should be mindful of. They may make it easier to operate your business.

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Requirements of the industry

For all growers

- Join your local grower association, preferably the state body.
- Be aware of the relevant state awards under which your staff may work. Workers compensation payments are high relative to non-industrial off-farm businesses. Both the Queensland Flower Growers Association and the Queensland Nursery Industry Association provide information on industrial awards to their members.
- Make sure you comply with state and council (local government) ordinances and requirements.
- Obtain a copy of the occupational health and safety regulations pertinent to your industry.
- Several species native to Queensland, and suitable for cultivation as cut flowers or foliage, may be on the list of regulated species covered by the Nature Conservation Act 1992. This includes all species of naturally occurring *Banksia* in Queensland including hybrids and intergrades, rice flower, *Cassinia laevis* and *Cassinia quinquefaria*. These species require licences to trade in material (including seeds and cuttings) harvested from the wild, or to cultivate them for the purpose of trade in harvested products

For the current status of the Nature Conservation Act 1992, which is undergoing revision, and licensing requirements for cultivated species of Australian native plants, contact the Environmental Protection Agency.

For exporting growers

- Japan and some European countries require a phytosanitary certificate issued by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service to certify that the flowers have been inspected and found to be free of obvious pests and diseases before export. The inspectors do not inspect for other product quality characteristics.

Not all countries (including the USA) need this certificate; however, it is good insurance for flowers sent to Europe, as flowers are freely re-exported within the European Union. An importing country can change their phytosanitary requirements for a particular species of plant or a range of plants at any time. Check with AQIS before export.

- Export trade in internationally endangered plants (that is, those listed on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna [CITES]) and all Australian native plants and plant material (such as cut flowers, stems and foliage) is regulated under Australian law through the Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982.

An Environment Australia permit or authority must be issued before the consignment of any native flowers or listed species. Permit or authority applications may be obtained from Environment Australia, a Federal Government department. Some flower



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export companies have a supply of permits on hand and facilitate this process for their growers. Export records must be returned to Environment Australia during the year.

Codes of practice

Producers of wildflowers have a responsibility for ensuring clean air and water, protecting biodiversity, correctly managing the disposal of waste and controlling noise levels. The two main acts of parliament affecting intending flower growers are the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992. These Acts fall under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency and may be viewed in full on the Queensland Government web site: www.legislation.qld.gov.au

The Queensland Nursery Industry Association, in conjunction with the Queensland Flower Growers Association, is drafting a *Code of practice for the nursery and cut flower industries*. When the Minister for Environment has ratified this document, growers abiding by the voluntary code of practice will have a legal defence to a charge of causing unlawful environmental harm. Under the proposed code, growers have responsibilities to conserve native species and ecosystems; minimise water usage and maintain its quality; minimise the release of contaminants into the air; ensure the sustainability of material and energy resources used; minimise the impact of noise; protect the land (including vegetated buffer zones and erosion control); and to minimise the use of chemicals.

Approved codes of practice in Queensland are the Queensland Farmers Federation *Code of practice for agriculture, March 1998* (available at www.qff.org.au/features/natural/home.html) and *Farm Care—Cultivating a better future: Code of practice for fruit and vegetable producers in Queensland, 1998*.

For information on the status of the flower industry code of practice contact the executive officer of the Queensland Flower Growers Association.

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Industry access to pesticides

There is a limited range of pesticides registered for use on ornamental plants. Often those that are available can only be obtained in excessively large pack sizes. There has been a reticence on the part of chemical companies to register many effective chemicals for use on ornamental crops. The companies perceive the registration process as providing a low monetary return for the work involved.

It is rare to have a particular wildflower crop listed on a product label. Often the listing will be for 'tolerant' ornamental crops. This means that unless you know from previous experience that the product is safe for use on your plants, you are advised to test it for phytotoxicity (plant damage) on a few plants, before spraying large numbers. Government regulations require that you only use chemicals registered for your crops, either in a broad (for example ornamentals—tolerant) or specific (for

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example proteas) category. Breaches are enforced under the *Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988*. Permits for off-label use may be applied for through the National Registration Authority, however, these can be difficult to obtain.

Growing wildflowers organically

The possibility of growing wildflowers organically depends on the crop, farm location and the market's requirements. More labour will be needed for activities such as hand weeding, since chemicals cannot be used. Organic growing methods include pest and disease resistant varieties, crop rotation to reduce soil-borne pathogens such as root-knot nematodes, fallowing, intercropping, the replacement of synthetic fertilisers with natural products (such as animal manures and legume crops) and the use of a limited number of approved natural products.

Export markets require pest-free, blemish-free products and this can be difficult to achieve in an organic enterprise. The domestic market may be less critical, but consumers are becoming more demanding of quality product. The appearance of flower products is important because they are a 'fashion item', whereas consumers may tolerate blemishes in other organically grown products such as fruit and vegetables. Generally, consumers in Australia are yet to recognise the merits of organically grown flowers, however they have become a trend in Europe.

Taxation reform and GST

The reform of the Australian taxation system, including the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), will have a significant impact on how flower growers do business. Obtain competent professional advice on taxation and accounting matters before going into business.

Three useful web sites that are being continually updated with new developments on taxation are:

- <http://www.ato.gov.au>
- <http://www.taxreform.ato.gov.au/>
- <http://www.rbt.treasury.gov.au>

