

Riverside Gardens Flourishes with State Awards Win



Riverside Gardens at Shepparton was named as the Best Medium Garden Centre in Victoria over the weekend at the state awards dinner for the 2008 YATES Nursery & Garden Industry Awards.

The win grants Riverside Gardens the **top statewide accolade** for medium nurseries and garden centres in the prestigious awards that recognise innovation and outstanding acumen among nursery and garden industry businesses.

The awards were judged through a process which combined the judging of a written submission and an on-site judge's visit.

Through this process, the garden centre was praised by the judges for their **business accomplishments** over the past twelve months, and for the **exceptional quality** of their plants, trees and shrubs, while staff received top marks for friendliness and willingness to help customers.

Family owned and operated for 25 years, Bob and Moira Smith moved Riverside Gardens in 1995, to its present location 5 kilometres south of Shepparton. The move onto the new two-hectare site saw the business expand to include an 18 hole mini golf course set amongst display gardens surrounding a man made lake and a large indoor display area.

Riverside Gardens supplies plants and garden care products to customers throughout Northern Victoria and southern NSW. They also sell cubbie houses, sheds and bungalows, and offer a complete landscaping service and short and long term plant hire services.

The garden centre was commended by Awards judges for many of these additional services that have helped it remain profitable through drought and strict water restrictions. Increasing their revenue by more than 40 per cent over the past four years, the garden centre attributes much of the increase to giftware and garden décor sales and educating staff and customers to be water wise gardeners.

Nursery & Garden Industry Australia's Acting CEO, Robert Prince, describes state award winners like Riverside Gardens as the leaders in the industry. "These businesses are leading the way through innovation, expertise, and sound business practices, to help the industry forge ahead in the future. They are helping to ensure that the industry grows and adapts despite the effects of the drought, water restrictions and other such challenges."

The Awards guidelines encourage businesses to strive for exceptional service and innovation, and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of those nurserymen and women who help gardeners achieve their dreams.

Other Victorian winners include:

- TGA Australia Pty Ltd (Somerville) – *Best Medium Production Nursery*
- Greenhills Propagation Nursery (Tynong) – *Best Large Production Nursery*
- Macdonald's Plants Plus Nursery (Bendigo) – *Best Small Garden Centre*
- Lintons Garden & Home (Mt. Eliza) – *Best Large Garden Centre*
- Steven Day from ParksWide Nursery (Forest Hill) – *NGI Young Leader*
- Bulleen Art & Garden (Bulleen) – *NGI Community Award & NGI Environment Award*
- Van Schaik's BIO GRO Pty Ltd (Bayswater North) – *NGI Supplier Award*

All state winners will now progress through as National Finalists in the 2008 Yates Nursery & Garden Industry Awards, to be held in March. The Awards will be held as part of the NGIA National Conference, with the national winners of all 12 Awards categories announced at the event.

The 2008 Nursery & Garden Industry Awards are sponsored by YATES, with Commonwealth Government support through HAL (Horticulture Australia Limited).

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