

SHORT-TERM TRAINING ON SMALL & LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL PLANT NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT & MANAGEMENT IN ETHIOPIA

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1 Modern propagation center at Genesis farm Debre Zeit (Photographed by Kiflemariam Y., 28 April 2010)

The nursery industry is literally a growing industry. It produces billions of plants every year, making major contributions to the forestry, vegetable, fruit, landscape, cut flower and parks industries. There will always be a demand for plants and, in turn, there will always be a need for nurseries.

Throughout the world, nurseries come in all types and sizes. Many are small family businesses, sometimes just a small hobby business to supplement the family's normal source of income. At the other end of the scale are large commercial enterprises that employ dozens of people and grow millions of plants. No matter what size, a nursery always needs good management if it is

to be financially viable. The nursery industry has been a growth industry throughout the world for several decades. Worldwide, there is a rapidly growing demand for potted plants: the US has the largest share of world consumption, followed by Germany, Italy and France. The main exporters of potted plants are the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium.

In Ethiopia, nurseries generally have been, and still are, small businesses employing fewer than five persons. Most of them are owned by office of agriculture established with the aim distributing fruit and tree seedlings at subsidized costs for peasant farmers. A few are private owned nurseries established to generate livelihood incomes for the family. Thus, in our country there are good opportunities for those having interest to establish new nurseries that function at commercial scale. However, this is provided that they are selective in what they grow and that they maintain adequate standards in the quality of plants they produce.

The current surge of interest in gardening, in Ethiopia, is influenced by a number of factors including increased home ownership, higher disposable incomes, and changing life-styles. These factors have fuelled interest in 'garden makeovers', resulting in the growth of landscaping services and consumer demand for instant color, larger plants and more hard elements such as paving, outdoor furniture and water features.

This short term training aims to provide the necessary knowledge and skill and enable the trainee capable of making a difference by establishing a plant nursery of commercial scale in terms of financial viability, contribution to the environment, and in fulfilling the growing demand of plants, and hence the success of his/her project.

JUSTIFICATION OF TRAINING

Staff training is an ongoing and necessary aspect of any nursery. In some situations staff training is a legal necessity, such as when staff must be licensed to use certain dangerous chemicals. In other situations training becomes necessary because new tools, equipment, materials, products or procedures are introduced into the workplace. Many nurseries deal with such changes by simply informing staff and assuming they will remember. This approach is rarely successful, and a more formal approach is necessary if changes are to be adopted and effectively practiced.

Training employees makes good sense for many reasons:

- It reduces the time needed for new employees to reach acceptable levels of performance;
- It saves money, prevents misuse of equipment and avoids wastage of materials;
- It provides employees an opportunity to gain new skills; and

- It gives new employees security, which helps in the overall development of motivation.

Staff is the greatest asset of any business – even if you have the best retail site, the best store layout, the best range of products and the most competitive range of products, your business won't work if you have poorly presented untrained and uncaring staff.

Thus, we recommend you to do the following:

- Select the best staff and train them better than anyone else;
- Give them every reason to stay in your employment (and give them no reason to leave);
- Make sure your staff know very clearly what is expected of them;
- Remember always that questions from customers can lead to sales. If your staff cannot answer customer questions in an informative and friendly manner then customers are likely to go elsewhere.

How good are trainings? Properly educated nursery staff has the potential to be more efficient and productive. They are often considered to be the most important asset of a nursery. There are two ways a nursery manager can access appropriately trained staff: employ people who are already competent, or employ people with potential and train them.

Nursery managers should consider the level of skills and training they require

of their employees (and themselves). Any nursery, large or small, needs some staff with broad based training and a way of thinking that will help the employees foresee future needs and take innovative action whenever needed.

How good are formal courses? Some are very good, others are not. The quality of a course depends largely upon the people running it, and how well those people are resourced. Formal recognition is a minor concern in most nurseries. The things that matter most in this industry are the quantity and quality of plants, selling those plants and making a strong profit.

What about training in the workplace? If you are unable to find qualified staff, it is possible to train them in the workplace. For example, you might consider the following: bringing in a trainer, training staff yourself, or sending staff to the training center.

CONTENTS OF THE TRAINING

1. Introduction to the nursery industry
2. Location and site of nurseries
3. Nursery design
4. Propagation of nursery plants
5. Potting and transplanting of nursery plants
6. Selecting and managing nursery stock
7. Pest and disease management
8. Growing media
9. Nursery materials and equipment

10. Irrigation
11. Glasshouses, shade-houses and other nursery structures
12. Management of nurseries
13. Marketing of nursery produces and products

TARGET GROUPS OF THE TRAINING

- ✓ The commercial nurserymen;
- ✓ Individuals or groups interested in new nursery business;
- ✓ Horticulturalists involved in agricultural extension work, research, or teaching;
- ✓ Agricultural development agents working in government offices or NGOs;
- ✓ Students of agriculture or horticulture;

General objectives

- ✓ To make you best nursery practitioner and skilful manager;
- ✓ To enhance the quality and productivity of planting materials.

Specific objectives

- ✓ To enable you establish a standard nursery site capable of producing quality nursery materials;
- ✓ To enable you manage your nursery business professionally;
- ✓ To enable you market your produces with value addition.

TRAINING METHODS



Figure 2 Our students at field visit (Genesis Farm 28 April 2010)

Trainee centered type of training method is followed. Both theoretical and practical hours will be conducted on participatory bases. Each of the theoretical and practical hours occupies 50% of the total training period. During discussion hours, trainees will be acquainted with the theoretical background of the subject under discussion. During practical hours trainees will choose their ideal nursery sites, develop their nursery site designs, practice the different methods of plant propagation, prepare potting mixes, make use of the different propagation equipments, estimate propagation efficiency of planting materials, develop nursery stock list for their nursery, calculate costs of nursery production, and as a final point they develop nursery development business plan.

Finally, the activities of the trainees in group and individual bases will be

evaluated based on assignments provided.

DURATION OF THE TRAINING

- Small scale nursery establishment and management 64 hours (8 days);
- Large scale nursery establishment and management 96 hours (12 days).

PLACE OF TRAINING

- Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

TRAINING FEE

- Negotiable

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