



Tips on how to build a good holding nursery



Some examples of holding nurseries.

Holding nurseries are basic structures designed to hold seedling trays on site so planting contractors or farmers can draw from them as required. They also serve as a base to harden seedlings to the specific site conditions. This article provides some do's and don'ts when setting up a holding nursery.

Nurseries growing timber seedlings have come a long way in the last 20 years, and now need to adhere to strict quality regulations in order to sell their seedlings. However, all of these are fruitless if the holding nursery that the seedlings deliver to has poor water quality, disease and weeds as high as the holding benches.

Here are some key areas where holding nurseries can be drastically improved:

Water

- Water needs to be clean enough to drink.
- There needs to be a minimum of 3 L water available on site per seedling tray per day. An average holding nursery will carry 2 000 trays therefore 6 000 L per day.
- A back-up water facility ie. water cart or bakkie sakkie.

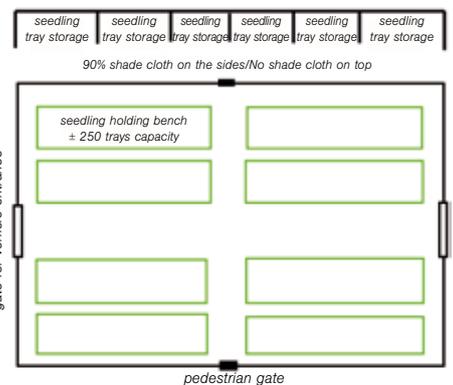
Benches

- Seedling trays need to be a minimum of half a metre off the ground.
- Wire strands are the most cost-effective method of keeping trays off the ground, although benches need to be supported correctly at the ends so the wire can be tensioned adequately.
- Benches need to be well drained underneath with suitable stone or ash crush between walkways to prevent slippery surfaces.
- Nursery site borders need to be mowed or weed killed to prevent seeds from contaminating seedling trays.
- Benches need to be pressure cleaned with water and (if allowed) some type of disinfectant bi-annually to get rid of any fungus or bacteria that is likely to be a cause of infection. This ideally needs to be done immediately before and after the growing season.

Setting up tips

- The perimeter of the structure needs to be wind proofed to prevent seedling trays from

Typical holding nursery layout



drying out and being flipped over in severe cases. This can be done with a heavy shade cloth of 80% to 90%.

- Shade cloth is not needed above the seedling benches unless hail is a major factor. The seedlings are in their hardening-off phase and need to be exposed to the elements.
- Diamond or rectangular fencing mesh can be stranded over poles as opposed to straining individual wires. This spreads the load of the seedling trays evenly.
- The watering can be done by means of a suitable hand-held garden hose, provided there is adequate water pressure. Micros are costly to implement, high maintenance and take in excess of 30 minutes to apply the water.
- Trays need to be spaced on benches so that seedling trays dry out evenly and not just on the edges.
- Concrete building blocks can also be laid two to three high at a width suitable to carry seedling trays. If the centre of the block line is 640 mm to the next seedling, trays can be straddled between them. This is more costly but will last forever and can be disinfected on a regular basis.
- A suitable area for storing empty seedling trays is essential which needs to be compartmentalised so that different tray types are not mixed. ■

Ensuring the supply of quality seedlings

The **Seedling Growers Association** has adopted a Certification Scheme to ensure that seedlings sourced from accredited nurseries match up to the highest quality standards. So don't take a chance, buy only from accredited nurseries and you'll grow healthy trees

SEEDLING GROWERS ASSOCIATION OF S.A.
SAALINGWEKERSVERENIGING VAN S.A.

For more information visit www.seedlinggrowers.co.za