

AUSCITRUS®

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INTRODUCTION

Australia now has a coordinated national Citrus Improvement Program (CIP) and budwood and rootstock seed schemes called AUSCITRUS. AUSCITRUS will be responsible for pre-post importation, multiplication, and release of high-health true-to-type budwood and rootstock seed to the citrus industry.

AUSCITRUS is an initiative of the Australian Citrus Propagation Association (ACP), the Australian Citrus Improvement Association (ACIA), the Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC), and NSW Agriculture.

The new cooperative has appointed a National Industry Development Manager (IDM). The IDM's role will be to: manage market research into existing and new selections and their unique cultural practices; evaluate market potential for overseas and in Australia including market access; implement uniform planting guidelines and recommendations for compliance with market and production needs; liaise and communicate with researchers, growers, AQIS, HRDC, Australian Horticultural Corporation, and other industry organizations; implement the 3-year business plan for AUSCITRUS.

AUSTRALIAN CITRUS FOUNDATION REPOSITORY AND ELITE BUDWOOD SCHEMES

The ACIP, in consultation with the Australian citrus growers, source and sponsor desirable imports of citrus budwood. These undergo quarantine indexing. Local cultivars have also been nominated for the program, these are virus indexed and where possible virus eliminated. Virus-free true-to-type stock is then maintained both in the field repository and in insect-proof screenhouses. The program aims to supply clean budwood of high-performance clones to the citrus industry in the shortest possible time. The program is funded through the sale of elite buds and a levy on seed and budwood sales from state multiplication schemes matched in dollar terms by the HRDC. Recently imported cultivars are performance evaluated prior to release; this can take between 1 and 4 years. Both Government agencies and a group of nominated nursery operators are involved. Bulking up occurs in field multiplication sites, for scions and rootstocks, by the various state associations and finally are sold on to growers and nursery producers.

A hands-on horticulturalist has been appointed to the citrus multiplication scheme at Dareton, NSW. This person has a key role in maintaining and managing the citrus foundation repository and the elite budwood schemes. The responsibilities of this position include: production, multiplication, cutting distribution of citrus budwood; harvesting, extraction, treatment, storage, and dispatch of rootstock seed; developing quality standards and maintaining QA.

The CIP budwood and seed schemes are helping the Australian citrus industry become more competitive as orchards are healthy, uniform, productive, and with new varieties — are meeting market demands.