

A NURSERY TRIAL TO COMPARE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

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Tree Trial: Do we need one? Is anybody interested?

In the ideal Nursery world we could all still be growing trees in kerosene containers.

I feel there is no perfect container for growing trees and if there was would Nurseries use them and would customers demand them?

If they did demand them would they pay the price?

I do not think we need a container trial. There has been a lot of work done on that already. Lets take the debate re containers and the debate between Nurseries, depending on what containers they use, out of the trial.

By this I mean for example, we at Mt William are prepared to grow trees in containers of several types: hard walled, treated with spin out, air-pruned containers, etc. and offer these as a trial by planting the trees in the ground, in a street, park, or in the Arboretum.

Let's monitor them over 10-20 years and re-visit the root system, keep records of watering requirements, rates of establishment, expose and examine root development, and find out does a particular tree from a particular container establish quicker, require less water, more water, need more formative pruning, or have a high mortality rate?

After all who in the audience has been involved in a street planting or park planting and some 5 to 10 years later are still replacing trees in the street or the park, with few healthy and vigorous trees left?

Not all the failures are due to tree selection, drought or vandalism. Perhaps it is something else.

Maybe it's the non-developing or inferior root system.

Why? Is it the container or the way the root system is treated at planting?

Is the success of a tree due to the treatment of the roots at planting or once a poor root system always a poor root system? Does the container make a difference?

A strong view of mine is there has to be a push for people within the Arboricultural industry and from people outside the industry to have arborists planting trees. Get people with knowledge and qualification to make sure proper procedures are followed. Even with the perfect container and the perfect root system some of the ways I have seen trees planted means they still have not a chance of long term survival.

After all when was the last time you got an arborists or a nurseryman to fix your plumbing? But by what I see, almost anyone can plant a tree, but can they?

Finally, I'm here today to cause some discussion on nursery containers. Is there a difference, is there someone out there who wants to take on a trial like this or is it not worth pursuing? Perhaps everybody is happy with the trees they are receiving and the root systems.