



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Desert Park Awarded First Central Australian NGIA Accreditation**

The Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) Nursery is the first nursery in central Australia to be awarded an accreditation under the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA).

ASDP nursery manager Tim Collins says the Park is committed to the accuracy, authenticity and quality of its scientific work and NIASA national accreditation recognises best practice standards for nursery businesses.

“The ASDP nursery unit is responsible for cultivating plants to create our world class educational and scientifically accurate plant displays for the visiting public,” Mr Collins said.

“Plants are an extremely important part of our displays.

“Most animals would not be able to survive in the wild without the correct vegetation and the habitat displays are constantly being enhanced so that they are as accurate as possible.

Mr Collins says the Alice Springs Herbarium is also located at the Desert Park and the nursery provides a supporting role by propagating rare and unusual species and maintaining potted collections for use by taxonomists.

“The Herbarium in turn provides us with expert identification advice and information used in the design and construction of habitat displays,” he said.

“The Nocturnal House diurnal displays are now using seasonal wildflower species to add colour and interest using live plants which would naturally occur in the wild with the animals.

“It has been a challenge to display some desert plants such as Poached Egg Daisies, which grow in bright sunshine, in an indoor display, but the results have been really rewarding.

“Many of the plant species we have on display at the park have rarely been cultivated in a nursery, and so the ASDP has an important role in developing new propagation techniques.

“Work in the nursery includes plant collecting, propagation and cultivation, as well as the maintenance of records pertaining to those plants.

“An important part of our job is providing advice to the public on the propagation and cultivation of arid zone plants.

“People can come in and ask about techniques used to propagate and grow any of the beautiful native flora they see at the Desert Park.”

Mr Collins says the NGIA accreditation is seen as a means of ensuring best practice standards are applied and the plants produced are of the highest quality.

“By achieving NGIA accreditation the Desert Park nursery is looking to build upon its strong base as a leader in arid zone horticulture.

“During the process of preparing for accreditation, the Desert Park nursery has been able to draw upon advice from the NGIA to improve the quality of plants and production methods and will continue to improve the nursery facilities.

“There are still many fascinating species of desert flora which are difficult or impossible to propagate, but with the improved procedures adopted for accreditation the nursery will be better equipped to research these hard-to-propagate plants”.

The NT now has the highest percentage of member participation in the NIASA scheme, with 9 accredited nurseries.

NIASA guidelines require a demonstrated commitment to efficient and environmentally conscious water management, plant nutrition and pest management.

**Ends**

**Media Note – For more information contact Tim Collins on 08 8951 8757.**

**Issued: 8:30am Friday, 1 December 2006**