

Success breeds success for Helix Australia

By Matt Ross



Adrian Parsons commenced work in the horticulture industry as a part-time employee with Peter McGain in 1981. At the ripe old age of 17 he discovered that Peter's considerable faith in him meant that a lot of work and a great deal of responsibility was heaped on his shoulders.

Adrian loved it.

Working the weekend shift at Peter's Chadstone store, and in charge by the time he was 18, were valuable formative experiences that continue to prove beneficial even to this day.

Adrian completed his Burnley degree in 1986 and then went to work for cut flower wholesaler Impulse Flowers. After a stint overseas, two years working in the flower markets of Holland, the U.S., the U.K. and Israel, Adrian came back to Australia convinced his skills would find an employer ready to make use of him, but no such luck. The obvious solution was to go into business for himself. That was in 1990, and he has been in business ever since!

First with Wafex, a leading exporter of cut flowers (fresh and dried) in Australia with warehouse, packing and coolroom facilities in Melbourne, Sydney Perth and California.



| *Chamelaucium Moonlight Delight*

And in 2008, Helix Australia, a wholly Australian owned and operated business specialising in the breeding, marketing, and licensing of new and improved Waxflower varieties.

We caught up with Adrian to understand a bit more about the Waxflower industry and Helix Australia.

Why did you choose to focus on breeding Waxflowers?

Until 1998 Australia dominated the southern hemisphere waxflower cut flower season from July until November. However, when South Africa and Peru started growing waxflower, we saw the only way we could survive was to invest in breeding improved forms of Waxflower that could command premium prices.

Consumer and landscaping plant trends change, how has that shift affected demand for Waxflowers through the years, and where is it currently?

Consumer uptake in native shrubs and grasses has grown strongly in recent years and our Waxflower hybrids have benefitted from this trend. Our Waxflower hybrids deliver compact easy to grow native shrubs that flower during winter and spring and can be pruned hard annually to maintain a compact shape.

What do gardeners and landscapers enjoy about Waxflowers? What are their strengths?

Gardeners and landscapers enjoy the wide range of waxflower colours and also the extended flowering season which can extend from June until November. Providing planted in well-draining soil with minimal frost, Waxflower provide bold winter colour alongside other mixed native plantings.

Do you work with any NGIV member nursery growers to produce your varieties?

Helix Australia has licensed nursery growers in every state of Australia which enables us to provide national purchase options for retail nurseries, big box stores and landscapers. NGIV members who grow Helix Australia varieties include, Native Plant Wholesalers and Humphris Nursery

Why should more nursery growers consider growing Waxflowers?

Helix Australia waxflower hybrids deliver strong economic returns for nursery growers whilst delivering extended sales and improved cash flow from June until November. The extensive range of Helix Australia waxflower enables growers to provide a wide range of colours across early, mid and late flower varieties. Our beautifully designed waxflower labels also make a very strong presence at the retail point of sale

Do you work with any NGIV member retailers to produce your varieties?

No, our hybrids are only grown by wholesale growers but we are keen to develop links with NGIV member retailers to help promote Waxflower hybrids via their current promotional mediums.

Why should more retailers consider stocking Waxflowers?

Helix Australia waxflower deliver very strong burst of potted colour from June until November. In addition, our varieties provide an extended shelf life and can be sold with no buds, buds and flowering stage from 50 to 100 per cent.

How would you suggest a retailer markets Waxflowers to their customers?

Massed displays of waxflower pots in end cap displays or merchandised close to the checkout will assist good stock turns for retailers. Helix Australia can supply high resolution Waxflower images to retailers upon request to use in magazine and social media promotional activities.



| Chamelaucium Sarah's Delight



| Dee's Delight

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| Edible waxflower variety Jambinu Zest

More information

Visit helixaustralia.com.au to view their entire range of Waxflower varieties and learn more about their work.

If a grower or retailer wanted to stock your varieties, how does that process work?

Contact Adrian Parsons (adrian@helixaustralia.com.au) to discuss growers or retailers wishing to stock our varieties.

How have Helix Australia's varieties of Waxflower changed the market?

Helix Australia varieties have greatly expanded sales of waxflower via a much wider range of colours, bud size and extended flowering seasons. Our striking pot labels also enable retail waxflower sales even when not flowering.

Of your current varieties which plants are performing particularly well?

Our larger bud waxflower varieties such as Moonlight Delight, Sarah's Delight and Dee's Delight deliver strong sales results whilst providing outstanding winter garden colour. Our edible waxflower variety Jambinu Zest marketed under license by Tucker Bush Plants is creating a brand-new sales pipeline outside our flowering waxflower varieties.

What are the future opportunities for Helix Australia and the Waxflowers?

Through our strong relationship with Perth based Kings Park & Botanic Garden our somatic fusion breeding program will soon start to deliver a whole new suite of 'mega' waxflower hybrids with flowering and bud size double that of current waxflowers on the market.

In addition, we are looking forward to developing an exciting fundraising project with SAS Resources Fund in conjunction with our new waxflower hybrid 'Local Hero'. The SAS Resources Fund's mission is to assist current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, and their families, who suffer hardship because of their service with the Special Air Service Regiment. Monies will be collected via the Waxflower Local Hero label. 🌿

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