

21 March 2012

To whom it may concern,

The Greening Australia NT Darwin Nursery has been using the media/soil additive Bactivate since December 2010 on a recommendation from a local rural supplies company, Tropigro.

As a result of including the additive to our usual medias we have noticed an increased germination percentage, a minimum of 40%, reduced incidence of 'damping off' in seedlings, it is now rare and can always be traced back to poor hygiene practice, and a substantial increase in growth rate from seedling size to saleable tube. Thus our lead times for a crop has been reduced from 20 weeks to 14 weeks from pricking out to saleable 50mm tube, even less with some species! Once potted on from tube to a 140mm pot or beyond there is very little further intervention required for either fungal or insect attacks. In the last 12 months I have given the nursery a full "cocktail" spray twice. This was in response to a particularly nasty pest (spiralling whitefly) which was relatively new to the region. In the main plants get attacked and then recover very quickly with no reason to resort to blanket treatments. I feel this is because of the increased health and vigour that is triggered in the plant by the addition of Bactivate.

Although we still do get occasional outbreaks of fungal diseases we have noticed that, if allowed, the plants recover without intervention, ie application of a fungicide. The usual fungal issues we have include Pythium (damping off) and Phytophthora (root rot) particularly with plants from the Proteacea (Grevilleas and Banksias). These two species are my main concern.

Another benefit I have found with Bactivate is the reduced reliance on fertilisers I have pulled back including the extras we regularly added such as Ferrous Sulphate and nitrogen in the form of Urea, I have also reduced the rate of slow release prills (Osmacote) by 25% without ill effect, I feel I could probably reduce this by a further 10-15% and with Osmacote at \$130 per bag that is a huge cost saving. Plants are lasting longer between top dress applications, it is our policy that by growing on smaller batches we rarely top dress as the plant is sold before it starts to show deficiencies thereafter going into the ground with a recommended application of a pre-plant fertiliser. I would like to see Bactivate and MLC become available in a smaller home garden format so we can sell on to our retail customers who are always looking for non chemical ways of improving plant and soil health.

Kind regards

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Horticulturist of 31 years experience.

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