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Overview

Established by NGIV for the first time in 2024 to recognise outstanding plant varieties, stimulate and foster innovation and interest in the sector and educate the public about the value and importance of diverse plant species, the Plant of the Year award is the most prestigious award in the Australian horticulture sector.

Each organisation's application will be allocated into one of 4 categories. In each category each entry receiving a score of 80% or more will be shortlisted, and then a winner chosen for each category. From the 4 category winners the overall Plant of the Year will be chosen. The 4 categories are:

- Tree
- Shrub
- Herbaceous
 - Annual
 - Perennial
- Other/specialist
 - Climber/vine
 - Edible
 - Succulent
 - Indoor/house

Prizes

The winning overall **Plant of the Year** will be awarded:

- Use of a licensed custom Plant of the Year badge/logo for promotion of the plant, including labels.
- Plant of the Year branded digital graphics and tiles for the winning organisation
- Plant of the Year point of sale material for print and use at garden centres
- Industry facing NGIV promotional package including:
 - Extensive coverage in NGIV's industry magazine Groundswell
 - Announcements in industry enews (reach of 4,500+)
 - Social media posts
- Plaque/trophy
- External media briefing for industry publications
 - Timed media release, coordination and support for any media opportunities
 - Information on the NGIV Plant of the Year website
- Opportunities at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS):
 - Winning plant to be featured at various touchpoints at MIFGS 2025
 - Featured in MIFGS Welcome Garden, located near main entry gate
 - Featured in dedicated NGIV Plant of the Year display (both public and industry facing)
 - Opportunity to create a striking, stand-alone display in a prominent show location, with site provided free-of-charge (curation and delivery at cost of winner, consultation with NGIV and event organisers required)
 - Opportunity to engage directly with the public through main stage presentation
 - Inclusion in MIFGS digital show program
 - Digital marketing in the lead up to and during the show through MIFGS channels reaching an engaged audience of over 260K (social media posts, enews articles)

- Winning plant details included in media briefing packs relating to MIFGS
- Support to distribute plant through retail channels at the show

Category winners will receive:

- Use of a licensed custom badge/logo for promotion of the plant, including labels.
- Branded digital graphics and tiles for the winning organisation
- Point of sale material for print and use at garden centres
- Industry facing NGIV promotional package including:
 - Extensive coverage in NGIV's industry magazine Groundswell
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Process

An organisation must submit one application per plant entered. Organisations may enter multiple plants in any given year.

Each application will incur an entry fee being:

- \$1,000 ex GST for NGI members; and
- \$1,800 ex GST for non-NGI members.

Applications must be made using the NGIV application form, and the complete application form, entry fee and all required supporting evidence must be received by NGIV by 28th October 2024..

Specific terms and conditions for entering the competition are set out on the application form. Once an application has been received, NGIV will review it to ensure it meets all application/documentation/evidence requirements. If further information is requested by NGIV, this must be received before 28th October 2024.

Compliant applications will then be referred to an external judging panel to individually judge and score the application. The judging criteria are set out in the table below.

Once applications have closed, and individual judging has been completed, the judging panel will come together, to view the plants in person. Plants must be made available for viewing at Melbourne University Burnley Campus soon after applications have closed (date for drop off TBC) to be eligible for awards. The Judges will then discuss and score each application, producing a shortlist

of the highest scoring plants above 80%, according to the criteria, in the 4 categories, as well as the chosen winner in each category and an overall Plant of the Year winner.

The scoring weights attributed to the entries will hold for shortlisted plants and for category winners. The 4 category winners and the overall Plant of the Year will be chosen by the judging panel, and all information provided in the application, and other matters the judging panel thinks are relevant, will be taken into consideration.

Each decision of the judging panel is final and binding and may not be challenged by any person.

- The 4 category winners will be announced at Australian Horticultural Trials Week 2024.
- The overall Plant of the Year 2024 will be announced to the industry at Australian Horticultural Trials Week 2024.
- MIFGS 2025 will see award winners announced to the general public, with a special display dedicated to the overall winner.

Key dates and deadlines

Applications open:	26 April 2024
Applications close:	28 October 2024
Category and overall winners announcement to industry and media:	Australian Horticultural Trials Week Dinner 2024
Winner announcement and display to public:	MIFGS 2025

Eligibility and entry requirements

- Plants have not been entered before into the NGIV Plant of the Year.
- Applications are open to all cultivars.
- An organisation which is a plant breeder, grower or seller may enter.
- An applicant must be able to prove that it is entitled to enter the plant.
- Plant must be available for sale in January of the year of their award (being the year following the year in which the submissions are due).
- Entry fees:
 - \$1,000 ex GST for NGI members
 - \$1,800 ex GST for non-NGI members

Judging criteria

CRITERION	SCORING CRITERIA	%
Sensory appeal	<p>The plant will be evaluated based on its aesthetics, and overall visual impact, considering colour, form/habit, and texture, as well as unique or striking colours, patterns, fruit, foliage, and distinctive features that distinguish it within its botanical rank (genus, species).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour – vibrancy, patterns, longevity, consistency, amount of colour 50% • Form/habit, texture, and other sensory elements if applicable 50% <p>Applicants should consider including in their application, photographic evidence of the entry across a range of sites and seasons, noting the visual attributes/traits of appeal. Higher scores will be awarded for evidence presented that highlights the attributes in detail.</p>	40%
Growth and performance	<p>The plant will be evaluated on its ability to exhibit consistent and reliable performance, thrive with minimal inputs and resources, achieve excellent growth both in establishment and over the long term, display resistance to pests and diseases, tolerate environmental constraints, and demonstrate robustness in cultivation across diverse climate zones and versatility in garden or landscape applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires low or minimal inputs to sustain satisfactory growth, performance and visual outcomes, including nutrition, irrigation, labour, etc. 50% • Adaptability to a wide range of environmental and biological stresses 50% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High pest disease resistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resistance to diseases and pests and/or rapid recovery from infestation. ▪ Reduced need for chemical interventions or treatments. ○ High tolerance to environmental factors (Light/shade, drought, waterlogging, soil compaction, soil salinity, air-borne salt, soil pH, etc) <p>As with the previous criterion, entrants will score higher if they present a broad range of evidence, with higher scores given to independent testing, evaluation and trialling. Evidence for growth in establishment and over the long term should be provided by the applicant.</p>	40%

Innovation & Marketability

The applicant should identify where innovation lies with the plant, considering: **50%**

- Introduction of inventive plant traits, such as compactness or enhanced disease resistance.
- Relevance to contemporary applications and uses.
- Originality as a new cultivar or a unique variation of a species, with evidence provided of the origins of the plant and breeder acknowledgment.

The plant will be evaluated on its potential commercial viability and alignment with market demand, as well as its uniqueness, origin story, or special attributes that enhance its appeal to consumers.

Furthermore, judges will consider its recreational value for both home gardeners and public spaces and educational potential for botanic gardens, schools, and horticultural programs. **50%**

- Commercial potential
- Uniqueness
- Origin story
- Innovative marketing strategies that set it apart
- Recreational value for home gardeners or public spaces
- Educational potential for botanic gardens, schools, or horticultural programs.

20%