



Nursery & Garden Industry
Victoria

Manual handling solutions for the wholesale nursery industry No.5

Accessing pots of plants on the ground or on benches

What is the activity?

Placing and retrieving potted plants on the ground or on benches for order picking, plant maintenance or moving.

What are the risks?

Manually placing plants in pots or trays on the ground or on benches below waist level in hot houses, or outside growing areas may involve awkward postures. Forward bending, twisting, reaching and stretching, increases the risk of musculoskeletal injuries of the shoulder and lower back. Often plants need to be moved, weeded, pruned or order picked.

Where pots are secured upright by weldmesh or trays for windy conditions, access can be difficult.

Injuries can occur suddenly if the pots are heavy and posture is awkward, or over a longer period of time through wear and tear.

Work can be repetitive and high-paced over a whole shift.

Work is often undertaken in cold or hot weather, on wet, slippery surfaces and in cramped conditions.

What is the solution?

The best solution is to provide raised benches or racks to support plants off the ground. These should be accessible from both sides and have a maximum width of about 1200mm.

The provision of mobile workbenches can reduce the amount of sustained bending.

When plants are on the ground, a row width of about 800mm accessible from both sides will enable work without over-reaching.

When plants are at ground level a row width of 1400mm can be maintained if access is provided for feet to be placed within the row.

When plants are at ground level, an aisle width between rows of about 400mm will enable forward facing work.

Shuttle trays with good handles make lifting pots easier as well as providing plant support in windy conditions and are an alternative to weldmesh.

Systems of work

To reduce the amount of sustained bending and reaching when accessing plants on the ground, a small mobile bench can be used to undertake work such as weeding and pruning.

This bench could be located on a wheelbarrow and made height adjustable.

Job rotation can be used to distribute the work amongst a number of workers.

Rosters should avoid working in extreme temperatures in hot houses.

Drainage should be used to minimise water on walkways.

Non slip footwear should be worn.



The activity



A solution

