

Starting a Nursery Business

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to share with you some things to consider when starting a small container nursery.

COMMITMENT

I believe that you need to evaluate your personal and monetary assets.

Nursery Experience. A degree in horticulture would be a wonderful asset. Next, the ideal situation would be to work for a progressive nursery producing similar crops which you would intend to grow. There is no substitute for on the job training. A minimum of 5-years experience is highly desirable.

Business Experience. General business skills are a must in any business. You will have to present a business plan or "Pro forma" to the bank to obtain financing. The plan will also have to contain a cash flow chart. A good CPA will help develop a professional "Pro forma" for you to present to your lending institution.

Capital Investment. This includes expenditures for:

- Land.
- Soil mixer system.
- Front-end loader.
- Graded growing beds for producing containerized plants.
- Irrigation system.
- Sprayer system.
- Break area for employees with facilities.
- Small office.

Next you must decide if you are willing to make the personal commitment to have a successful growing operation. For the first few years, you may have to accept a lower standard of living. You may have to postpone having your dream house for a few years. You will find yourself working weekends and holidays. The initial sacrifices you make in the beginning will be rewarded many fold down the road.

LOCATION

After everything else is in order, you will have to find suitable land for your nursery. Choosing the right property can save you many dollars in the future. We will now discuss some important factors to consider in purchasing property.

- Availability of water should be your first consideration. You will need great quantities of good quality water.
- The land should be affordable for your intended use. If possible, try to get an option on adjacent land for future expansion.
- Locate as close as possible to a good expanding market area for selling your product.

- Make sure the roads and bridges are in good condition leading to your location. The road system must be able to handle an 18-wheel loaded truck.
- Soil type and topography are important factors to consider for your location. Good topography can save you many dollars in reducing grading costs. Try to find land with good natural drainage. Remember, it costs major dollars to drain water up hill.
- Make sure adequate three phase electrical power is available. Large pumps and motors require three phase power.
- Try to locate between urban and rural areas with a good labor supply. Good luck on finding people willing to get their hands dirty!

If you make wise decisions going into business, you will reap the rewards much sooner.