

# The Saltbush Nursery...

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It was 24 years ago when I turned 50 I became a Grandmother for the first time and got an off farm job as a Saltbush Nursery Assistant. This was very challenging as I had never organised so many people before.



The nursery is the most advanced of its type in Australia and one of the most sophisticated in the world.

The first stage of the Nursery covers a total area of 25,000 Squares meters and can cater for up to 4.8 million seedlings at any point of time.

It provides a sheltered, controlled environment for the plant during their most vulnerable early stage of growth, specialised open hardening areas are provided for the plants prior to shipping and field transplanting.

All the plants are assessed at various points during their initial growth stage for robustness. This allows the selection of the strongest Oldman Saltbush seedlings for field planting providing the highest possible survival and establishment rates even in harsh conditions.

Oldman Saltbush (*Atriplex Nummularia*) seedlings in the nursery commences in October and goes right through until February of each year.

After germination the seedlings are placed into a controlled, sheltered environment for 10 to 12 weeks. Then are strong enough to be placed on outside benches where they are hardened over a further 14 to 16 weeks. Regular watering, fertilizing, pruning and weeding operations are carried out during this period.

Prior to dispatching, the plants are pre fertilized, leaves air dried so as to remain at their absolute peak during transit to the field for planting.

The individual seedlings are taken from their growing trays and packed into specially developed waxed cardboard boxes which hold 600 fully primed seedlings ready for planting in the field. Depending on the number of seedlings ordered there is a mechanical transplanter available for big areas of seedlings to be

planted. As they are planted they receive a little injection of water and then wait and see them grow.



Oldman Saltbush has long been recognised as a palatable drought fodder, particularly for sheep. It develops a lattice of woody stems which branch from or close to ground level and utilises a taproot with a subsequence root system that is moderate to deep.