

Award of Merit Citation

Todd Layt

The recipient of this award grew up on a turf farm in the early to late 1970's and was running the farm as the third generation turf grower by the 1980s where he gained his first-hand experience with turf varieties. The farm was sold in 1986 and Todd spent a few years working for larger corporate companies.

With limited resources he founded Abulk in 1990 which was a large propagator, production nursery and turf farm which was subsequently sold in 2003. During this time he was an integral part of the design and supply of dryland and wetland areas around the Sydney Olympics.

After some years many of his customers kept asking for an improved native grass so with this in mind Todd developed Australia's 1st improved native grass, *Poa labillardieri* 'Eskdale'.

This became the genesis of the new company he founded, Ozbreed in 2003 as a plant and turf breeding and marketing company. Todd is the head breeder as well as the marketing manager. Ozbreed specialises in drought tolerant landscape plants, but also has a range of retail orientated ornamental plants.

The business quickly grew with improved varieties of ornamental grasses, strappy leaf trees and shrubs and improved turf varieties. Many of the plants and turf he has developed are used on harsh roadside projects. Now many of these same plants are finding a home in green roofs and green walls around the world. He is currently involved in green roof and green wall plant and substrate research, plus other research projects including the quantifying of carbon sequestration of many Australian native plants.

Today Todd is one of the best known Australian breeders of turf and Australian Native Plants, breeding over 35 different varieties. Many of these plants are now selling by the millions overseas, in places like the USA, Europe, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan. He has licensed many of the plant varieties to hundreds of growers around the world, with the help of his team of staff, including his wife Marina, son and two daughters

Todd has been instrumental in developing the market for new imported varieties of turf in Australia, including soft leaf buffalo Palmetto, and has in addition bred 4 new turf types, one of which is Sapphire Buffalo which is currently being rapidly expanded in the USA.

In his spare time he manages to write for various publications across Turf and Horticulture and was the author of Drought Tolerant Gardening Guide, 2009. He has written for the Landscape Contractor and the Landscape Manager Magazines for over 10 years.

He is a husband, father, grandfather and mentor to many of the people who he has employed. He is a visionary and dedicated breeder, researcher and marketer who instils a level of professionalism to the nursery and garden industry both here and internationally. He is also a passionate advocate of the benefit of plants to the environment, landscape and community.

It is an honour to declare Todd Layt as the recipient of the NGINA Award of Merit for his outstanding contribution to the horticultural industry.



Presented by Doug Shelton, 20th November 2015

