Introducing the Plant Sure Ornamental Plant Decision Support Tool

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Summary Horticulture accounts for a substantial proportion of the plant species introduced into Australia. It is therefore no surprise that horticulture is the source of the majority of exotics that have become invasive. Whilst strict importation controls currently regulate the arrival of new exotic plant species, the sale of exotics already present are less regulated and there is the potential that some of these will become garden 'escapes' and invasive. Thus, a cost-effective way to restrict the spread of potentially invasive plants is to intercept them at the nursery level before they 'jump the garden fence'. The Plant Sure Environmentally Safe Ornamental Plant Scheme project is a collaborative undertaking that aims to limit the supply or dissuade the use of non-native plants with high potential for invasiveness. The Plant Sure Ornamental Decision Support Tool (OPDST) was developed as part of the Scheme to provide a voluntary screening tool for the green life industry that discourages the sale of plants with a high risk of becoming invasive. The OPDST comprises a set of 24 questions and separates plant species into invasion risk categories. Species that are assessed as low invasive risk are accepted into the Scheme and species assessed as high invasive risk are rejected. In a recent trial, 58 species were evaluated to test the accuracy of the OPDST. The OPDST achieved 100% accuracy in accepting non-invasive species and rejecting invasive species, where the 4 species assessed as 'needs further evaluation' were not accepted. This presentation introduces the OPDST and discusses its role within the green life industry.

Keywords Horticulture, screening tool, invasive.