

Agritourism case study

Tropiculture Australia, NT



Location

Bees Creek, Darwin, Northern Territory.

Land tenure and primary business type

Classed 'Rural Living' we are an individual grower horticultural block that has been freehold since the 1970s.

Competitive advantage

We offer a broad range of rare fruit, with over 4000 trees in the orchard and 200 varieties of fruit (including 29 species of mango!). Our product is organically produced with the ability to taste, learn and purchase direct from the grower, located only 30 minutes drive from Darwin.



Tourism offerings

We are open to the general public on Saturdays from 8am-midday. Product offerings include:

- nursery and orchard
- farm sales
- fruit tasting
- special events, tours and school groups on request.



Growth journey

Established 45 years ago by the Nathanael Family. We now produce over 400 varieties of fruit trees, vegetables, herbs and spices. We supply commercial growers, retail nurseries and the general public in Australia and overseas.

Local people, businesses and visitors were turning up at the farm ad hoc to purchase produce and trees. Every time someone turned up production had to stop impacting processing and supply. At the same time, retailers couldn't take all of our stock so we decided to formally welcome the general public in one day per week. Tour groups, special events and school bookings are welcome on request (fee based). In addition to this we now:

- conduct our own research to assist with sustainable approaches to growth and share these learnings with other organisations, peak bodies and interest groups
- regularly welcome visiting friends and relatives from a range of nationalities keen to sample and purchase exotic fruits
- are frequently promoted via shows such as Gardening Australia and Mercurio's Menu
- participate in a range of expos and shows including the Fred's Pass Show, Fred's Pass 50km feast, Royal Darwin Show, Best Ingredients of the Top End (BITE).

Future growth plans

- begin education on the importance of reducing carbon footprint, greening spaces and producing own food
- we'll continue to adapt and deliver more sustainable organic produce
- working towards regenerative power sources which will provide almost half of the electricity needs

- we want to become the largest producer of organic based fertilisers and potting mix
- install water-saving solutions
- collaborate with Landcare.

Viability and benefits

Although production has to stop to open to the public, it is very viable opening on Saturday mornings. Customers can purchase a broad range of up to 400 different varieties of fruit and vegetables and plants to grow their own.

Advice to others looking to start a tourism business

- have lots of new things for customers to see, try and learn about – not just mango and paw paw!
- have products to sample and materials (e.g. brochures, catalogues) to hand out
- participate in relevant trade shows, events and media where products can be showcased and awareness generated
- need infrastructure and equipment to showcase your product; this could be sufficient 'shop' space, shelters and a point of sale
- allow enough time and be available to share your story and connect customers to the product – this is what people are interested in
- people want to meet the 'boss' and they feel like they've had an authentic experience when they meet the lead character
- continue identifying opportunities for support; we have found it hard over the years to gain grants for 'visitor' facilities such as a customer amenities block, as we haven't been considered a tourism product.

Agri-businesses need to work together with the Government to support opportunities in growing and benefitting from tourism.

