

## PERSONAL APTITUDE

Becoming a successful nursery operator requires more than a love for gardening. To be successful, a nursery operator must possess a high level of commitment and have a broad range of skills. In order to reduce expenses, it is beneficial for the operator to be able to perform all, or most, of the work required in the day-to-day operation of the business. The skills required to operate a nursery include:

- technical trade skills, such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, welding, and mechanics;
- knowledge in crop production, including plant growth and development, soils, plant nutrition, and pest management;
- business skills, such as record keeping, inventory control, business and personnel management, marketing, and accounting; and
- the ability to cope with adversity is invaluable, since adversity is inevitable. Adversity will arise in the form of weather or pest-related crop problems, equipment breakdowns, staff problems, and poor sales and cash flow.

The more of these skills an operator has, the better his/her chance of success. However, do not be discouraged if you do not possess all the skills listed, since they can be learned from courses offered by local educational institutions. Information about post-secondary programs in BC is available at the [Education Planner website](#). There are numerous 1-day nursery seminars offered during the year that may be of particular interest to new growers. Information about these industry events is available on the [BC Landscape and Nursery Association](#) (BCLNA) and the [InfoBasket](#) websites.

The Canadian Agriculture Skills Service became operational in BC in the fall of 2005. The program provides assistance for training in both farm and off-farm skills. The types of training that are eligible include college programs, and short courses and field days. The process involves 3 steps, including skills assessment, development of an individual learning plan, and training. The program is delivered through Service Canada and is available to farmers and their spouses. Eligibility and benefits are based on family income. For more information about the program, contact Service Canada at: 1-800 O CANADA, or on the [website](#).

As the nursery grows in size, there will be the opportunity to hire staff with specialized skills. Until that day, the nursery operator will truly need to be a “Jack-of-all-trades”.