

WHY INCOMING STOCK QUALITY CONTROL MATTERS



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Incoming stock quality control is essential to uphold your business's professional standards, efficiency, and profitability. Whether receiving living plants, fertilisers, pots, tools, or homewares, careful checks on arrival help catch problems early — from pests and diseases that threaten plant health to damaged goods that drive customer complaints and waste. These issues directly affect both your reputation and your bottom line, increasing write-offs, lowering sell-through rates, and adding operational strain.

Any items that do not meet your quality standards should be rejected immediately and returned to the supplier or held in quarantine until resolved. Avoid compromising your stock or customer experience by accepting substandard deliveries.

It is also best practice to record the date of arrival for every incoming stock item, usually on their price label. This supports effective stock rotation particularly for living plants and perishables and provides traceability in the event of future issues or supplier claims.

A consistent quality control process ensures only healthy, compliant, and saleable products enter your store or nursery, protecting your team, your customers, and your bottom line. It also strengthens supplier accountability and helps build long-term relationships based on reliability and transparency.

Incoming Stock Quality Control (ISQC)

Purpose:

To inspect and verify the quality of incoming stock before it is accepted into inventory. This ensures all items meet order specifications, quality expectations, and compliance standards. A strong ISQC process helps protect your business reputation, reduce stock losses, and keep displays fresh, functional, and sale-ready.

Applies to:

- Live plants and propagation material
- Garden products and allied items (fertilisers, pots, tools, etc.)
- Homewares and decorative goods (ceramics, baskets, vases, textiles, etc.)
- Stock for both retail sale and internal production use

ISQC Process Overview

1. **Receive Stock** – Check delivery against the Purchase Order (PO), invoice and/or delivery docket.
2. **Inspect Quality** – Visually and functionally inspect plants, homewares, and garden goods.
3. **Complete Checklist** – Use the applicable checklist to document findings.
4. **Determine Action** – Accept, reject, or quarantine based on inspection outcome.
5. **Report Issues** – Notify supplier of discrepancies, damage, or pest/disease presence.

ISQC Checklist – Retail Plants, Garden Products & Homewares

Use for finished goods being sold directly to customers.

- **PO Match** – Product type, quantity, and SKU match the purchase order.
- **Product Condition (Plants)** – No signs of pests, disease, wilting, or stress. Healthy foliage, stems, and roots.
- **Product Condition (Non-Plant)** – No cracks, chips, scratches, dents, or broken parts.
- **Packaging** – Undamaged, protective, and retail-presentable.
- **Labelling & Tags** – Barcodes, tags, brand marks, and price labels are correct and legible.
- **Size/Variant Accuracy** – Matches order (size, colour, fragrance, shape, etc.).
- **Aesthetic Presentation** – Uniform, clean, dust-free, and attractive to customers.
- **Expiry Date (if applicable)** – Still well within shelf life (e.g. fertilisers, candles, lotions).
- **Safety Compliance** – Meets safety standards (e.g. electrical items, sharp tools).
- **Supporting Documentation** – Manuals, care instructions, warranty cards, MSDS (if applicable).

Inspection Outcome:

□ **Pass** □ **Fail** □ **Quarantine**



ISQC Checklist – Production Nursery Inputs & Components

Use for plant materials, consumables, or tools used in propagation and growing.

- **PO Match** – Correct quantity and type of plant or material received.
- **Plant Health** – No disease, pests, wilting, or poor root structure.
- **Root Quality** – White, healthy roots – not pot-bound or underdeveloped.
- **Material Suitability** – Media, pots, trays, tags or tools meet performance expectations.
- **Batch/Lot Tracking** – Clearly labelled for traceability.
- **Packaging** – Securely packaged to avoid damage or drying out in transit.
- **Certification (if required)** – Movement declarations, MSDS, COAs, or accreditations included.
- **Storage Suitability** – Safe to store on site (e.g. fertiliser or chemical compatibility).

Inspection Outcome:

□ **Pass** □ **Fail** □ **Quarantine**

Rejection Procedure

If stock fails inspection:

- **Document the issue clearly**, including taking photographs, item details, batch/lot numbers (if applicable), and the date of arrival.
- **Segregate rejected items** immediately to prevent them from being used, sold, or displayed. Label them clearly as “Rejected” or “Quarantined.”
- **Notify** the purchasing or quality control team promptly.
- **Reject and Return** the stock to the supplier where possible, or request a replacement or credit. Include documentation of the inspection and non-compliance (with photos of the issue) for traceability.
- **Record the Arrival Date** – this helps track when the stock was received, supports rotation, and may assist in identifying patterns in supplier performance.
- **Follow up** – ensure that rejected stock is removed from inventory systems and supplier resolutions are confirmed in writing.

