

How to Verify if an Agarwood Seedling Business Nursery is Legal



The demand for agarwood—often referred to as "liquid gold" due to its high-value resin, essential oils, and aromatic products—has skyrocketed. Because of this lucrative market, the trade of agarwood seedlings has also surged. However, purchasing from an unverified or illegal nursery can lead to low-survival-rate saplings, smuggled or poached strains, and severe legal liabilities.

In the Philippines, ensuring that an agricultural or tree-farming nursery is legitimate requires looking into specific regulatory registrations. The primary baseline of legitimacy for any commercial entity is its registration with the **Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)**.

This article outlines the step-by-step process of verifying whether an agarwood seedling business nursery is operating legally, utilizing the official DTI portal.

Step 1: Request Basic Business Information

Before heading online, ask the nursery owner or operator for their official registered details. A legitimate business owner will readily provide:

- **Registered Business Name** (which may be different from the trade or brand name they use on Facebook or public signage)
- **Owner's Name** or Registered Proprietor
- **DTI Certificate Number / Reference Code**

Step 2: Use the DTI Business Name Registration System (BNRS)

The DTI provides an online public portal to check whether a business name is officially registered, active, and legally permitted to operate within its scope.

1. Open your web browser and go to the official [DTI BNRS Search Portal](#).
2. Read and agree to the terms and conditions if prompted.
3. Type the exact **Business Name** provided by the nursery into the search bar. *(Note: The BNRS portal typically requires an exact name match, so ensure spelling, spacing, and suffixes like "Enterprises" or "Nursery" match what is on their documents.)*
4. Execute the search to view the directory entry.

Step 3: Analyze the Search Results

Once the search yields a result, check for the following critical markers of validity:

- **Registration Status:** Ensure the status explicitly says "**Active**". If it says "Cancelled," "Expired," or "Terminated," the business has no legal standing to transact commercial sales.
- **Scope of Registration:** DTI registrations are categorized by territorial scope (Barangay, City/Municipality, Regional, or National). Ensure their operational scope covers where they are selling or delivering from.
- **Owner's Name:** Cross-reference the owner listed in the database with the person you are communicating with or buying from.
- **Nature of Business:** While DTI registration gives a business a legal identity, check if the registered scope aligns with agriculture, forestry, trading, or general merchandise.

Beyond DTI: Other Crucial Permits for Agarwood Seedlings

While a DTI registration proves that the business entity itself is legally registered as a commercial enterprise, **agarwood is a heavily regulated commodity** due to conservation laws (many *Aquilaria* species are protected under CITES—the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

A truly legal agarwood seedling nursery should ideally be able to present or comply with additional environmental and agricultural requirements:

1. **Local Government Unit (LGU) Business/Mayor's Permit:** A DTI permit is only a business name registration; to legally operate a physical store or nursery lot, they must secure a local Mayor's Permit from the municipality or city hall where the nursery is located.
2. **Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Permits:** Because agarwood-producing trees (*Aquilaria* species) fall under strict forestry and wildlife laws, commercial cultivators and sellers often need to coordinate with the DENR. Depending on scale and operations, legal nurseries should be able to trace the legitimate legal sourcing of their mother trees.

3. **Wildlife Culture Permit (WCuP) / Transport Documents:** If you are buying mature trees or transporting large quantities of seedlings across regions, regulations by the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) may require a Wildlife Culture Permit or Local Transport Permits (LTP) to ensure the flora wasn't poached from protected natural forests.

Summary Checklist for Buyers

- ☐ Got the exact registered business name from the seller.
- ☐ Verified the status as **Active** on the [DTI BNRS Search Portal](#).
- ☐ Confirmed the physical location matches the LGU business permit.
- ☐ Inquired about DENR/forestry compliance regarding the legal source of the agarwood seeds or mother trees.

By taking these preliminary verification steps, you protect yourself from fraudulent traders, ensure the high genetic quality of your investment, and support sustainable, legal agroforestry practices.