

# The Value of a Perfect Tag

Tagging options continue to adapt with shifting customer demands, distinctive marketing strategies and unique value-added packaging options.

By Leslie Kirk and Don Eberly

Tags constantly evolve to keep up with new plant material. Growers, retailers and consumers want new and improved varieties, and the same goes for packaging. There are plenty of tagging options that give growers maximum value yet still attract the consumer and promote the grower.

With a bit of understanding and strategic planning, the right tags can increase sales and satisfy consumer demands. Ultimately, a plant tag must meet several goals: growers' branding

requirements, retailers' marketing requests and consumers' general informational needs. Other essential information includes the declaration of identity (product) and statement of contents (size and/or weight).

Plant labels can be hang tags, stake tags or adhesive stickers. At times, they can even be free-standing labels or signage. Created with high-tech forms and functions, tags are designed to outlast and outperform their predecessors. But in the end, they must perform the same functions: educate, entice, engage and endure.

Terra Nova Nurseries, a national grower and breeder located in Canby, Ore., and Garden Splendor, a regional plant brand developed by Overdevest Nurseries for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, have explored creative tagging initiatives and developed new tags that adapt to customer demands.

## Marketing a Value

Appropriate tags can contribute to a plant line's overall brand message. Tags are incredibly important because they enhance the look of the product, instantaneously acting as a representative for the product's value.

"We invest heavily to make sure the quality of our tags matches the quality of our plants," says Dave Doolittle, marketing director for Terra Nova Nurseries. "It all boils down to effective product packaging: A gardener is much more likely to feel confident paying a premium price for a premium, user-friendly package."

As a foundation, tags should aim to attract attention quickly in order to help retailers boost sales. Visual stimulation through professional photography is extremely important because it showcases a mature product and allows growers and retailers to raise awareness of the plants' best attributes.

It is beneficial to design distinctive graphics that can stand alone but also remain eye-catching when paired closely to other pots on retail shelves. The brand managers for Garden Splendor recently designed new pictorial tags to help retail customers stand out from competition.

"We put considerable effort into helping design a special stick stake that displays the tags at an angle," explains David Wilson, marketing director for Garden Splendor and Overdevest Nurseries. "When the plants are put together





Photos: Terra Nova Nurseries and Garden Splendor

on benches or even on the ground, they prominently present the tags, and the whole display looks really sharp.”

Through both copy and design, tags should convey the company’s commitment to consumer success. End consumers are looking for encouragement and reassurance that they can be suc-

cessful. Growers do their part by providing care information that is easy to see, interpret and follow.

“A tag will capture the attention of a customer for only a few seconds, so the most sought-after information needs to be easily located,” explains Doolittle. “With our new design, we made sure

to reposition the text so the most important information is located at the top, along with our logo. Our goal is to have the consumer recognize our logo and identify the plant as a premium product they have had success with in the past.”

Growers should also always consider cobranding. Having two names on the tags can

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both reduce cost and show support for a retailer or partnered brand. Both Terra Nova Nurseries and Garden Splendor have offered this marketing alternative to their

grower and retailer customers, both with a positive response. Cobranded tags take advantage of the branding and marketing conducted by the grower as well as the

brand equity earned by the retailer with years of neighborhood and regional sales.

**Added Value**

Whether purchasing plant tags or designing them internally, growers can benefit branding-related sales by exploring practical yet unique ways to make tagging programs successful. Providing something extra with tags or packaging can often be the difference between a sale and a long-term customer, between a plant that remains on the shelf and one that leaves the store. Terra Nova Nurseries and Garden Splendor have each uncovered unique ways to provide added value with their packaging, leading to boosted sales and positive customer feedback.

A staple of the Garden Splendor brand is the "Remember Me" marker, an exclusive anodized aluminum marker embossed and printed with the logo, website address, and botanical and common names of the variety.

"They are called Remember Me markers for many reasons," says Wilson. "They help people remember the names of the plants and quietly remind them of the retail store where they bought the plants. They also remind people of the brand and website, so they can get more information about the plants and brand, and find inspiration for getting other varieties."

In this way, this permanent marker supports all three markets: the Garden Splendor brand, the retailer and the end consumer.

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Garden Splendor's Remember Me Tag.

Garden Splendor uses the unique Remember Me marker as an added value to include with its pictorial tag, which provides quick,

at-a-glance information for the browsing consumer.

"It extends the value from the retailer's yard to the homeowner's

yard," explains Wilson. "While it is just one element of the brand, the Remember Me marker is very important for the overall suc-

cess of our Plants Worth Remembering package."

Sometimes, added-value incentives can be developed or found through special offers. Terra Nova Nurseries recently began offering premium plant tags free with every shipment.

"At Terra Nova Nurseries, we place a major emphasis on providing the tools to make our customers successful," says Doolittle. "Whether it's working directly with them to choose the perfect plants, breeding varieties that provide grower solutions, or offering marketing and tagging support, we want to help growers succeed with our plants."

Especially with a sagging economy, growers want to save on packaging or even cut costs entirely. So for Terra Nova Nurseries, offering a free tags program was a natural next step in helping support its customers when they needed it most.

"Our tag program was designed specifically to make growers' jobs easier and is in place so they have one less thing to worry about," says Doolittle. "We've always received positive feedback regarding the effectiveness of our tags, so having the opportunity to receive them at no charge is a huge bonus for our customers."

Regardless of the tag's design or the marketing plan surrounding its use, success must include a strategic and consistent approach. **GPN**

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