

Anatomy of a Tag



Research indicates that more than 70 percent of all gardeners keep the tags from the plants they bought and use them as garden markers or for future reference. Do yours provide the best information possible?

By Gerry Giorgio

Tags. They are the ubiquitous little soldiers of the garden center, standing at attention and ready to help people become successful gardeners — or at least give them a running start toward horticultural mastery.

Often times in a social setting, I encounter people not of our industry. The question ultimately turns to what I do for a living. When I tell them I work for a company that prints plastic tags for the horticulture industry, their look is one that I would imagine to be the same as someone gets who works for a button or shoelace company. Many encounter tags as a component of a common product, yet they never give much thought to the design or complexity of such a thing. But like many products, tags have their own peculiarities; the nuance of their design and engineering can make them a valuable item or a disastrous failure. So, to that end, I'd like to take some time to inform you of the differences in tags and how you can ensure the purchase of ones that work for both growers and gardeners alike.

Tags serve many purposes, and their value

is different among growers, retailers and home gardeners. So depending on your specific area of need, here is what you should know about what makes a good tag.

In the Greenhouse

For growers, tags can be crop markers, aids in picking orders or key supporting elements for a unique program they want to sell. Further, they need to work well in automated planting machinery, where a poorly engineered tag can be costly if misses necessitate retagging.

When purchasing tags, growers should:

- be sure that it contains the same nomenclature that is used in your system. This keeps a consistent naming of your product with what is sold.
- consider a non-English speaking work staff and a possible need for bilingual tags.
- ensure that the tag you use is scaled appropriately to the pot size and plant habit. A tag that is too small can easily get buried below the soil line — thus losing its effectiveness — and impact the value of your product.
- pay attention to the strength of the stake.

At Home: For Gardeners

The plant tag is an important part of the products you sell. MasterTag's market research confirms the importance and order of plant label information desired by consumers and growers. Following are the critical components of a tag that should be considered in providing gardeners information they need and want:

Plant type. Gardeners say that knowing whether a plant is an annual, perennial, herb or vegetable is the most important information on a label.

Planting location. Next to plant type, gardeners want to know where they should place their plants for optimum success.

Common name/variety name. Most people refer to plants by their common name. Many times, a specific variety is desired or will be referenced in future purchases.

Bloom period. Knowing when their new flowers will bloom — and for how long — is important in helping gardeners decide what plants to buy.

Photography. Large, high-quality photographs inspire gardeners and provide an excellent reference for future purchases.

Botanical name. Latin names are important to growers and can be of interest to some gardeners. They are the most accurate method for plant identification.



Recycle symbol. By understanding recycling requirements of different plastics, shoppers can make informed decisions on being sustainable.

Patent notification. Breeders must protect their intellectual property by indicating patent protection on their unique varieties.

Website URLs. People are interested in knowing more about a plant than a tag can provide. Web addresses help direct them to enhanced information and images.

Bilingual/multilingual text. Many retailers request multilingual text to best serve their diverse customer base. It broadens the appeal and accessibility of garden plants.

Icons. When simple text and pointer words are accompanied by icons, it enhances communication within a limited area.

Reverse text. Most gardeners indicate that they prefer reverse text on the tag. It allows them to see the information on the back without removing it from the pot.

Poorly engineered tags will be weak and not stick efficiently by either automated or hand sticking methods.

- understand the requirements for adding your weights and measures, which includes a declaration of responsibility on the tag.

- work with a creative company that understands your industry or marketplace and can offer suggestions for designing differentiating programs to take to your customers.

In the Garden Center

For retailers, tags can represent a store brand, be part of a unique merchandising program

or even cross merchandise other products in the store. Independent garden centers could use tags to position themselves as a family business and look different from their mass retailer competitors. But the first consideration for all retailers should be how the tag serves the needs of their customers.

When purchasing or specifying tags, a retailer should:

- make certain that it provides the appropriate information for successful gardening.

- ensure that tags are useful in helping make purchase decisions.

- use a tag that offers an intrinsic value that can inspire or inform.

- send a message that is consistent with your stores identity or brand.

- be large enough to be seen easily and hold all of the necessary information. Placement should facing the shopper and not buried below the soil line or pot rim.

Tags are an important element of any retail plant. Research shows that more than 70 percent of all gardeners keep their tags and use them as garden markers or for future reference. The information they contain can make the

difference in a customer's willingness to purchase the plant. They remain the primary method for communicating at the retail store and offer great potential to add true value to any product. [GPN](#)

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