

# Dos & Don'ts Of Custom Labeling

Learn the dos and don'ts of custom labeling and how it can help you have the right labels for your outstanding varieties.

By Joe Fox

At a very basic level, the customized elements of a grower's program provide a point of differentiation. Everyone has competitors, so we strive to add value to our specific offerings. This is important to separate us from those competitors. Some of these differentiating points include product quality, rapid delivery, appealing displays, unique products, merchandising service and more.

One of the most visible, differentiating elements of your plant "package" can be your choice of label. This article will address the unique elements that can best represent your company and your "value proposition" at the specific level of customized labels.

## A Consumer Information Vehicle

The first thing to always keep in mind is that your plant label is a consumer information vehicle. Everything you put on this label must catch the consumer's eye, effectively communicate your message and provide the required take-home information.

I will highlight some of the dos and don'ts to consider when you are developing a custom label. You will see examples of some of the customized items that have been produced. Take a look at some of the custom labels in the marketplace today. See if you can spot the dos and

don'ts of developing an effective custom label. With this new information, you can decide for yourself just how effective these labels are likely to be.

Here are some of the most important key components to making sure the custom label you decide on works for your business.

## Label Shape

### Do...

- Use unique shapes to draw consumer attention.
- Make the shape relevant to the theme or plant product.

### Don't...

- Use a shape that is overly expensive or inconsistent with the product line.
- Use a shape that only a portion of your intended consumers will connect with. For example, don't use the shape of your home state when you sell to multiple states.

## Creative Design

### Do...

- Work with a design team that understands today's garden consumer.
- Create a custom design that will stand out at the retail display. Remember, a range of green foliage and beautiful flower colors will surround your design.

### Don't...

- Push your own creative ideas if you are not of the age group and gender of the primary decision maker at retail. Designs that don't appeal to you may sell extremely well. ♦



Labels are one of the most visible, differentiating elements of your plant "package." (Photos: MasterTag)

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## marketing



Unique label shapes can draw consumer attention, just make sure the shape is relevant to the theme or plant product.

- Attempt to accomplish more than what a tag can do. Excessive amounts of text, icons, logos, etc., will render your custom work ineffective.

### Theme Name

#### Do...

- Arrive at a concept theme or name of a program that quickly connects with the consumer.
- Build a name around a commonly accepted need for today's gardener, such as outdoor decorating, help with plant selection, container gardening or new products.

#### Don't...

- Confuse consumers with meaningless horticultural references, grower company logos or names that don't provide some indication of the benefit to them.

### Variety Naming

#### Do...

- Get advice from tag companies that have conducted consumer research relative to what is effective on garden product labeling.
- Place the plant name at the top of the label so it is easy to identify.
- Use the most up-to-date "common" name for the highest recognition among consumers. (Purple coneflower may be better referred to as echinacea.)

#### Don't...

- Feel compelled to put the botanical name on the front. Research indicates consumers like to know they have the Latin name if needed for future reference, but it is not needed on the front of the tag.

- Place the name below the photo since it just may get buried in the soil.

- Change or alter trademarked names on specific items.

### Photo

#### Do...

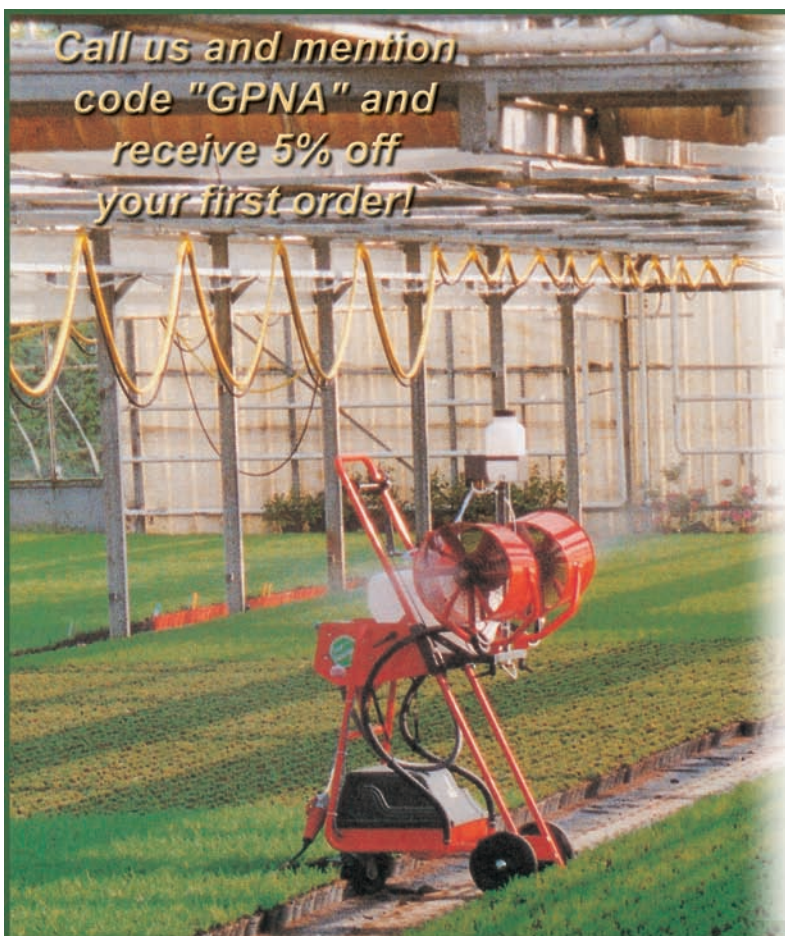
- Determine the best photo representation for your item or theme. This may call for an image of the fully grown plant in a landscape setting. It may simply be a close up of the bloom when a perennial is not yet in flower. Your custom label may not even need a photo.

- Remember a majority of consumers save their labels. They want to refer to the name and photo for future purchases, be able to reference care information, etc.

#### Don't...

- Request a close-up photo of the flower if the plant is fairly common and always sold at retail in bloom.

- Place too much emphasis on any one element of the label. This is one of many factors that goes into consumers' quick buying decisions.



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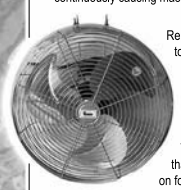
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**Consumer Care Icons**

**Do...**

- Consider using a vocabulary of icons, the universal language, which tells consumers what they want to know without words.
- Make sure icons are large enough to easily be recognized, preferably on the front of the label.
- Place the important icons on the front, such as sun/shade and possibly spacing.

**Don't...**

- Forget to place the critical information for purchase decisions above the soil line on stake labels.

**Text Care Information**

**Do...**

- Consider including a Web site for product lines requiring more information or consumer help.

**Don't...**

- Give in to the tendency to provide too much information for the label size. This simply reduces the font to an unreadable size.
- Feel compelled to provide enough care information as if every consumer is a beginner. A high

percentage of consumers are quite successful with their purchase following basic guidelines. **GPN**

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**Watch For Copyright Issues**

Many of the elements of a customized tag can become proprietary and defensible. U.S. copyright laws protect unique themes, company logos and customized texts. This protection is not much different than the rights afforded to patented plant varieties.

The design of your label is the copyright ownership of the creative group that developed it. Your competitors are not allowed to duplicate this or provide any derivative work without formal authorization from the creator. The text copy on the label is also trademark protected and remains the property of the creative design firm that assisted in its development.

Photography images also fall under the protection of copyright laws. Many times it is easy to "lift" an image from a Web site, but this is a violation of the exclusive rights afforded to the photographer.

These elements contribute to the proprietary nature of your theme design, consumer text and image presentation on the label for your product.

Please keep in mind when developing a plant "package" that certain inventions and creations are the property of the developer. Photo images, artwork and design, text copy, logos, trademarked names and some label shapes are illegal to develop derivatives of or copy.

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