

The Importance of Labels in the Retail Plant Market

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Consumers are faced with a staggering array of products and services vying for their money. Sometimes they buy for a reason, sometimes on impulse. Your challenge, if you propagate plants for retail sale, is to ensure that when a consumer comes to make their buying decision, it is your plants that get bought rather than someone else's (or something else altogether).

Good labels helps producers to present plants so that they appeal to consumers, many of whom are thirsting for information and need to be convinced that the plant they're looking at is indeed one they should buy. A name label alone is simply not enough. Even a £10 camera comes with comprehensive instructions and advice for getting the best out of your purchase.

Labels can supply that reassurance with helpful care information, illustrating features, and benefits (such as flowers, fruits, or autumn colour not immediately obvious at the time of sale), and of course can include a brand, a guarantee, or an endorsement (such as the RHS Award of Garden Merit logo, if appropriate) to add further credence to the value of the purchase. Some plants have been linked to charitable donations, giving yet another reason for impulse purchase.

One major grower, who for a long time resisted moving into colour labelling, finally test-labelled some clematis. In the previous year the grower had sold 12,000 plants. The following year a staggering 200,000 plants were sold at twice the price.

But labelling is really just part of the story. For really effective promotion and impact at point-of-sale, growers need to consider a complete promotional package of coordinated bed labels, Correx boards, possibly leaflets, and perhaps even complete display systems.

Breeders, growers, and producers need to develop and support their plants with promotional support material — this should not be left to retailers. Some retailers will make magnificent displays, some will simply not get round to using supplied material, and some organised multiple retailers may demand material tailored to their own house style, but it is the grower that needs to manage how the displays should ideally be achieved, and provide the wherewithal to do it.

Some growers have been particularly successful at promoting their brand image, for example, Colin King and Kinder Garden Plants. From humble beginnings, a market leading position has been created by consistent and dedicated attention to integrated labelling, point of sale material, and retail display methods. The Kinder Garden butterfly is specifically looked for, each season, by satisfied consumers who come back for more.

Labels shouldn't be viewed as a commodity, a distress purchase, something a grower has to get at the last moment, just to get a name on the plant. They should be seen as part of the planned investment in building a brand, building a presentation, building a reputation for a plant or range of plants, that have doubtless required significant investment in other ways to bring them to the market in the first place.