

An Ideal Hangtag for Flowers, Fruits and Petioles



Marking individual flowers, inflorescences, fruits, petioles, buds and small twigs of plants is a frequent necessity for the biologist tracking the consequences of developmental change, pollination, frugivory or herbivory. Such markers must endure days, weeks or even a season of wind, rain and sun. Haunting problems with current tagging systems include short-comings of the means of attachment (tissue abrasion or breakage with wire ties, Gordian knots with string or thread, clumsiness for quick transfer, outright loss) and limitations or failures of the label itself (fading, water damage, excessive weight, invisibility, too visible for vandals, expense). Many of these problems are magnified when working with small or delicate stems. Jim Cane developed the following hangtag system for tracking fruit set and ripening in pollination studies with species of *Astragalus*, *Hedysarum*, *Lomatium*, *Dalea*, *Medicago*, *Vaccinium*, *Solanum* and *Saurauia*. This tagging system has proven to be cheap, versatile, durable and quick to deploy and recover.

Materials needed:

Tool for making embossed labels (e.g. Dymo Labelmaker™)

Plastic label tapes (3/8" or 1/2")

[Darker colors (red, black, blue) contrast better with the embossed white characters]

Punch for small holes (point punch used by entomologists is ideal)

Plastic triangular paper clips

Knife, scissors or chisel

Refer to the accompanying figure. Punch out your label strip of embossed numbers or letters, leaving 2-3 spaces for cutting and a punched hole. Cut tags and punch hole in the blank area of strip adjoining the embossed characters. Cut the triangular plastic paper clip once through an outer corner other than the apex (a chisel against wood yields quick, neat cuts). Slip label onto the clip at this cut, and slide it around the apex to the matching opposite uncut corner. Prepared hangtags can be accumulated in numerical order on a simple loose leaf notebook ring.

To hang the tag, simply open the outer loop of the clip using your finger and slip it around the stem. The tag will hang freely and lightly from the paper clip's apex. Where an indicator of group membership is desired (e.g. outcross vs. self), the Dymo label strips and paper clips both can be chosen for color coding.

Jim's tags are currently persisting in their sixth season of use with no serious signs of wear or failure.

Updated From: Plant Science Bulletin, Volume 37, Number 2, Summer 1991