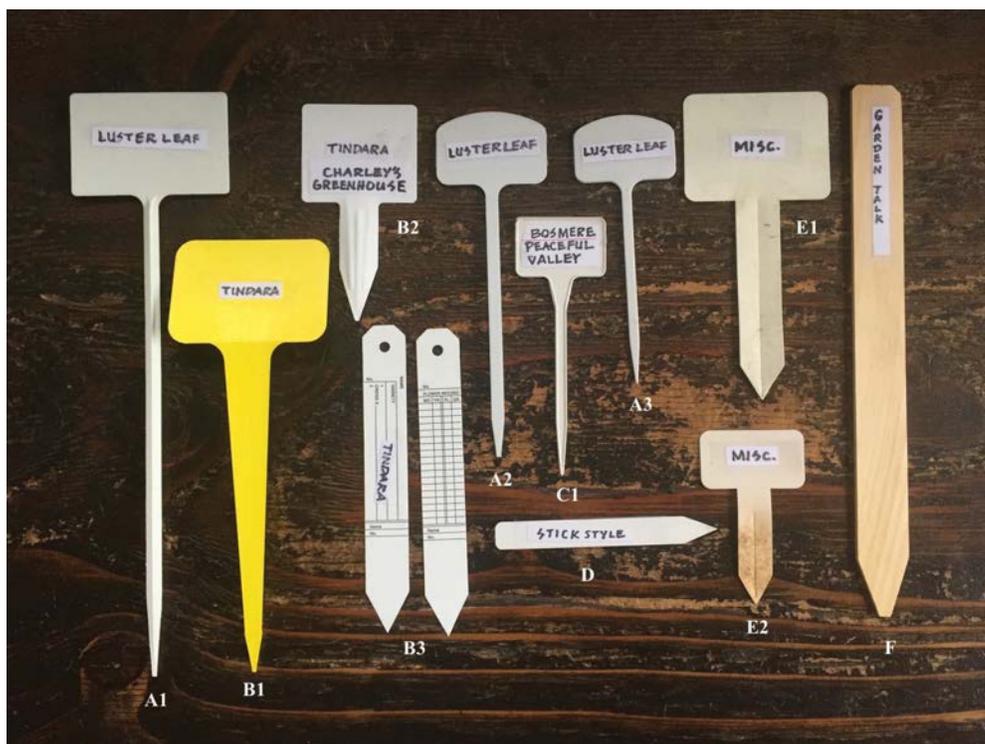


MARKERS & LABELS

By HIPS Staff

From a conservancy perspective, preserving the identity of an iris is as important as preserving the iris itself. Reliable, durable plant identification markers are the subject of this article. Readers should not be deterred by the authors' evaluations in determining which plant markers or means of labeling them will meet their own criteria. Sources cited are compiled with reference to other styles of markers they offer. Most were very generous with samples and responses to questions. Many other sources contacted did not reply or did not wish to participate. They are not cited. These products, except where noted, have not been field-tested by HIPS, who make no claim of expertise.

Costs cited are relative to the end of February 2018 from online research. Readers are encouraged to shop, compare, further inform themselves, and investigate additional sources. Quality and superiority, which most companies make a claim to, is best determined by familiarity with the materials used, their relative merits and disadvantages, and not by the strength of an advertisement. Every plant marker can serve a useful function.



Plastic Markers: PHOTO 1

There is a wide array of plastic plant markers of varying designs, heights, and colors. Those shown in Photo 1 are representative. An Internet search will reveal the options. Here are samples from five companies.

LUSTER LEAF GARDEN PRODUCTS sent three samples:

- **A1** 13" Ht straight T marker, 2³/₈" x 3¹/₂" nameplate, sturdy, double ribbed, a little flexibility. (5/ \$6.55)

- **A2** 8" Ht straight T marker, 1⁵/₈" x 2¹/₂" nameplate, sturdy, single ribbed, with little flexibility. (10/\$3.92)
- **A3** 6" Ht straight T marker, 1¹/₂" x 2¹/₄" nameplate, not very sturdy, good flexibility. (6/\$5.92)

TINDARA ORCHID SUPPLY

- **B1** 10" Tilt T marker, 2¹/₂" x 3¹/₂" nameplate, sturdy, single ribbed, moderate flexibility, available in yellow, white & black; 6/pkg \$8.95.
- **B2** 5" straight T marker, 2⁵/₈" x 2¹/₄" nameplate. Soft, thin plastic with good flexibility. Priced by quantity, start at \$1.00 each. (Also available from Charley's Greenhouse.)
- **B3** 7" stick style marker, 1" wide, very flexible, designed to record crosses on side and flowering times on the other, variety of colors available. Priced by quantity, start at 50¢ each.

BOSMERE USA

- **C1** (also available from Peaceful Valley) H160 5¹/₂" T marker, 1¹/₂" x 2" nameplate, sturdier than A3 but a bit less flexible; 23-29¢ each.
- **D** Standard 4" stick style readily available; usually available for 4-6¢ each.

MISCELLANEOUS Samples: both are soft, thin and flexible plastic, readily available.

- E1 7" T marker, 2½" x 3¼" nameplate.
- E2 4" T marker, 1¼" x 2¾" nameplate

GARDEN TALK

- F 12" Wood, stick style marker, 1⅛" wide x ⅛" thick. Appear to be of pine or fir; 25/\$16.95; 100/\$49.95.

Metal Markers:

PHOTO 2

With metals, gauge is a key consideration. Gauge (ga) is assessed on a numerical scale; counter-intuitively, the smaller the number, the heavier the gauge, so 10ga is heavier and stronger than 13ga. Superior metals of higher gauge determine the quality and durability of the marker, and do not always come with a higher price.



PAW PAW

EVERLAST LABEL COMPANY

- G1 Rose Style 11½" tall marker, 13ga stainless wire post, 1¼" x 3½" heavy-duty zinc name plate; 30/\$37.25. Also available with 21" wire, galvanized wire, or copper plates.
- G2 Hairpin Style 12" marker, 13ga stainless wire post, 7/8" x 3¼" light ga zinc nameplate; 30/\$37. Also available with copper plates or galvanized wire posts.
- G3 Flag Style 8" marker 13ga stainless wire post (also in galvanized), 1' x 2¼" regular light ga zinc nameplate; 30/ \$28.

IRIS CITY GARDENS

 First to manufacture a stainless steel version of the rose style marker.

- H Rose Style 12" marker, 13ga stainless wire post, 1⅛" x 3½" light ga zinc coated aluminum nameplate; 12/\$8.00. Also available in 18" ht.

KINCAID PLANT MARKERS Since 2005. Another innovator of the rose style design, using heavier stainless steel materials and changing angles/orientations of the nameplates for better visibility. See angles evident in photo. Prices vary with volume and heights. Three grades available.

- I1 Rose style marker with nearly horizontal orientation of the nameplate.
- I2 Rose style marker with diagonal orientation of the nameplate. Both styles priced the same.
- Rose Style Signature series: Post and nameplates stainless steel. 12" 10ga post, heavy gauge 1⅛" x 3½" nameplate; 25/\$30.05. Also in 6", 8", 10", 15", 17", & 20" ht.
- Collector series: Post and nameplates Stainless steel. 12" 13ga post, heavy gauge 1⅛" x 3½" nameplate;

25/\$21.50. Also in 10", 15", & 20" ht.

• Garden Series: Galvanized posts, stainless nameplate, 15" 13ga post, heavy gauge 1 1/8" x 3 1/2" nameplate; 25/\$20. Also in 10" & 20" ht.

CASCADIA IRIS GARDENS Also an innovator of the rose style marker offering heavier stainless steel materials.

• **J** 10" Rose Style (gauge of post not available but is barely smaller than the Kincaid post) stainless steel post, very heavy gauge stainless 1 1/4" x 3 1/2" stainless steel nameplate; 1-9/\$1.25 each; 10-49/ 95¢ each, etc. Also in 6" & 18" ht. Note: This product has the heaviest nameplate, heavier than the 26ga of the See-Fine nameplate. The Kincaid nameplate runs a close third behind See Fine. Other varieties use light to medium gauge metal.

SEE-FINE FLOWER MARKERS Since 1953; offering Botanical Garden grade plant markers. Designed to accommodate an engraved marker, it will also accommodate a custom printed label.

• **K** 13" galvanized 8ga single post with bend at bottom to prevent swiveling, 1 3/4" x 3 3/8" 26ga nameplate; 1-499/\$1 each; 500+/95¢ each. Also in 20" & 26" ht.

METAL GARDEN MARKERS 1490 Harper Puckett Rd, Bozeman MT 59718; 406-586-5970.

• **L1** D series 10" swivel marker, 13ga aluminum single wire post, 2 3/8" light gauge aluminum nameplate; 25/\$20.99.

• **L2** G series 20" 13ga aluminum single wire post, 1 1/2" x 3 1/2" light gauge aluminum nameplate; 25/\$25.99. Offer aluminum rose and cap style markers (colored & copper name plates available), also single post markers and sign post style, mini marker for smaller iris with reduced name plate size.

Metal Markers: PHOTO 3



PAW PAW EVERLAST LABEL COMPANY

• **G4** Rose Style 11 1/2" 13ga stainless wire post (available in galvanized), 1 1/4" x 3 1/2" light gauge copper; 30/\$38.25.

• **G5** Cap Style 10 1/2" stainless wire post (available in galvanized), 7/8" x 2 1/2" medium copper foil. (30/\$33.50).

• **G6** Miniature Label, 5 3/4" Rose style 13 ga stainless steel wire post (also in galvanized), reduced size 7/8" x 2 1/2" heavy zinc nameplate (also in reg zinc or copper) (30/\$30.50)

LUSTER LEAF GARDEN PRODUCTS

• **A4** Rose Style 10" 13 ga stainless wire post, 1 1/8" x 3 3/8" very light flimsy copper foil (6/\$11.38).

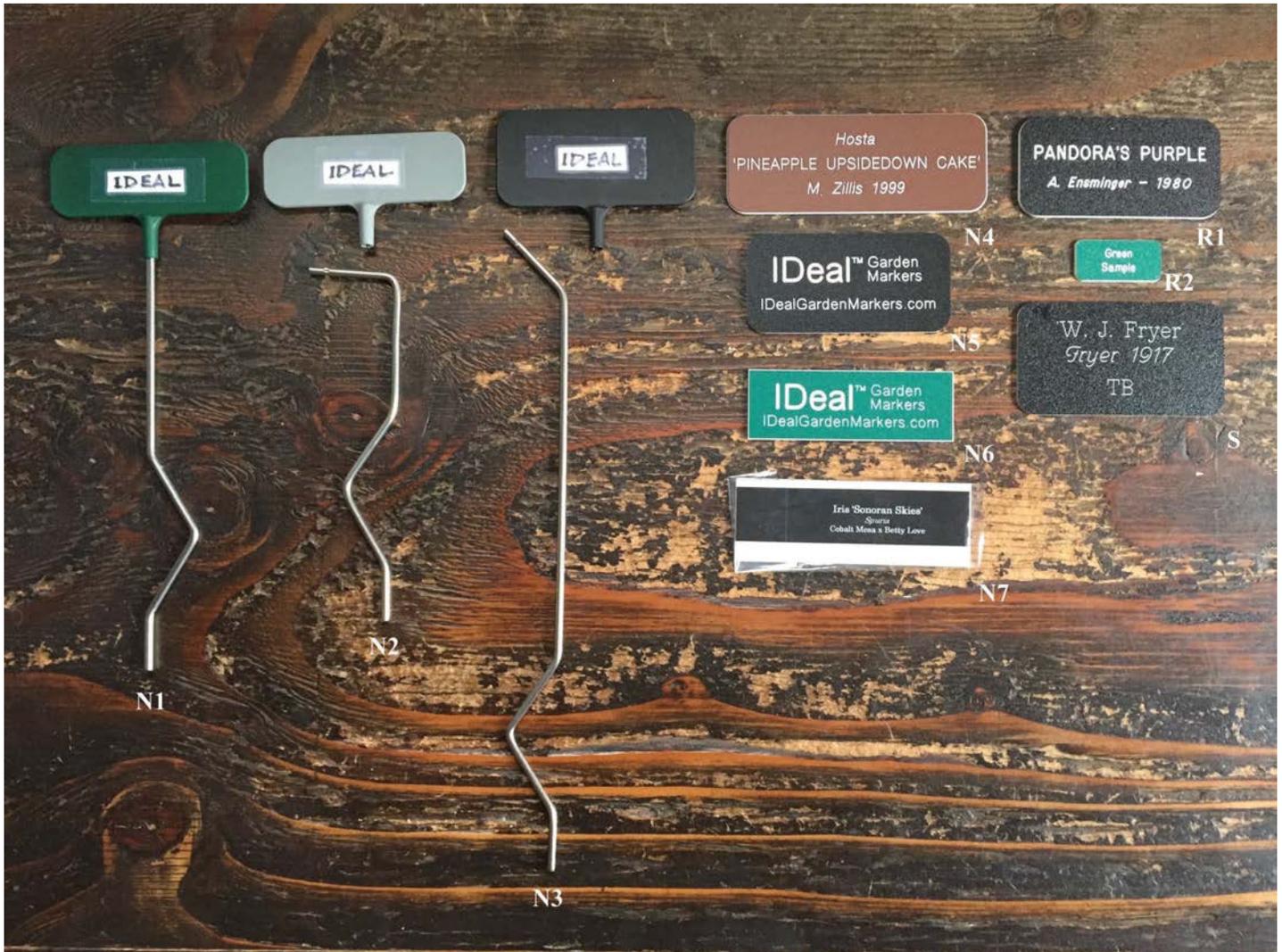
• **A5** 7" Ornamental 1 pc. very light ga and flexible copper marker (4/\$4.82).

GARDEN TALK

• **M** 2 7/8" All Copper T marker, very light ga copper, 1 3/8" x 2" nameplate. No price available.

GARDENER'S EDGE, 241 Fox Dr, Piqua OH 45356; 888-556-5676.

• **C2** 6.5" All stainless steel heavy ga 1 pc. marker (by Wren), 1 1/2" x 3 1/2" nameplate. 12 pk/\$25.29. (Also available through BOSMERE USA 50/\$72.83) Offer stainless steel 1 pc. plant marker (6.5"), rose, cap style, and hairpin metal markers (a mixture of colored metal nameplates available), plastic stick style markers, and labeling pens.



Metal/Plastic Combo Markers and Labels: PHOTO 4

IDEAL GARDEN MARKERS

All posts have a bend near the base to prevent swiveling.

- **N1** 7" 10 ga stainless steel post.
- **N2** 7" 10 ga stainless steel post with 45 degree tilt of nameplate
- **N3** 7" 10 ga stainless steel post with 90 degree tilt of nameplate (horizontal to ground)
- **N1/2/3** 7" (10/\$6.50), 11" (10/\$8.50), 20" (10/\$13.50), 30" (10/\$15.30)
- Nameplates: UV resistant and 2 sizes in black, gray or green
3 1/2" x 1 1/4" (10/\$7.90)
3 1/2" x 1 3/4" (10/\$8.90)
- **N4/5** (**N6** Sample color) Custom rotary engraved Acrylic Labels: Botanic Garden grade. Advertise a 20 year

life expectancy. White lettering on black, green or brown. Two sizes: 3.5" X 1.75" and 3.5" X 1.25" Contact for pricing.

- **N7 Custom Laser Printed Labels.** See label width and height dimensions on website. (.49 ea.)

Customers should get a plastic with a THICK CAP on the top layer to avoid sun damage. Some laser engraving plastics do not have a thick enough cap - thus the plastic can eventually crack or fade.

Gravoglas (2-Plex)

Designed with the same .010" cap thickness as our standard indoor plastic Gravoply 1, the UV stability of Gravoglas 2-Plex makes it perfect for all outdoor applications. Available in matte, glossy, or textured surface finishes for surface or subsurface engraving. Ideal for your outdoor signage and directional signs: Gravoglas™ 2-Plex™ Surface guarantees a high level of resistance to UV particularly in the textured version and ensures scratch-resistance.

AAA QUALITY ENGRAVERS

Custom laser engraved Acrylic labels: Botanic Garden grade.

R1 (R2 Sample color) White lettering on black, green, or coffee bean.

Prices vary with label size. See website for prices and options.

ENGRAVED GARDEN PATH MARKERS

Custom rotary engraved acrylic labels: Botanic Garden grade.

S White lettering on black 2' X3.5" label (Other colors may be available).

Contact for pricing.

Labeling

Whatever the plant marker one chooses, a means of labeling it has to be decided upon. The larger a collection, the more durable the marker needed. Sharpie pens and Sharpie Extreme, both advertised as permanent markers (and the Extreme as more UV resistant) are short-term solutions. A year is about as much service as one can realistically expect. Sharpie Paint Pens have, in our experience, proven little more durable. Those with black and red pigmentation fade as quickly as ink pens. Blue paint lost its pigmentation but left white lettering which was sufficiently visible on darker days but was lost in the glare of daylight, but we concede lasted a number of years if generally difficult to read. There are a host of other ink and paint labeling pens available: Garden Marker, Markal paint pens, the Pro-LineHP series, Decocolor paint pens. Many plant marker companies sell these and others with their plant markers. Having never field-tested them we can't speak to their durability, which certainly must vary relative to climatic conditions.

Graphite pencils are generally durable on plastic markers, more so than a Sharpie, but are subject to fading as well, though typically they still leave an impression on the plastic.

A colleague favors the Listo marking pencil (aka grease pencil made of hardened colored wax) on

recycled metal window blinds. He comments that if it is applied when soft and warm they last 4+ years, outperforming ink or paint pens. Grease pencils are designed for use on hard, glossy, non-porous surfaces—glass, rock, polished stone, plastic, ceramics, and metal—and can be removed with soap, water, and elbow grease.

Custom laser-printed labels, whether purchased commercially or made at home, are a more durable alternative. Custom-printed labels of varying quality can be had for 20¢ up to 49¢ and volume discounts are sometimes available.

AVERY labels are available for use with a standard home PC and laser printer and HIPS colleagues report them as very durable and inexpensive.

BROTHER USA retails stand-alone and/or PC-connectable laser printers at reasonable prices—a good investment for enthusiasts with larger collections in need of a durable and affordable label. Brother USA also sells labels of varying sizes for their printers, which themselves have varying label size capacities. One colleague has indicated his markers have lasted 7 years so far. Their PT D600 seems to be popular and uses their P Touch TZE laminated labels.

SOURCE LIST

AAA Quality Engravers, PO Box 9, Terry MS 39170; 601-878-5999. Custom engraved botanical grade acrylic plant labels, See-Fine and Simply Elegant Plant markers.

Avery, <avery.com>, online only. Retailing an array of labels suitable for use with a PC and laser printer.

Bosmere USA, 323 Corban Ave SW, Suite 501/2, Concord NC 28026; 704-784-1608. Wide array of plant markers, copper & zinc cap style, zinc rose style, wood, plastic T & stick style, copper tie on, paint pen.

Brother USA, <brotherusa.com>, online only. Purveyor of laser printers, both stand-alone and PC-connected models, laminated labels.

Cascadia Iris Gardens, 3011 13th Ave NE, Lake Stevens WA 98258; 425-770-5984. Well known iris nursery, high quality all stainless steel rose style plant markers.

Charley's Greenhouse, 17979 Washington 536, Mt. Vernon WA 98273; 800-322-4707. Greenhouse supplies; plastic stick style (various colors), plastic T markers.

Engraved Garden Path Markers; 812-483-2127; <chrisingler@yahoo.com>. Custom rotary engraved botanical garden grade acrylic plant labels and See-Fine Markers.

Garden Talk, PO Box 433, Topsfield MA 01983; 978-887-3388. Higher quality garden tools and products, stainless steel 1 pc. marker, wood and plastic, rose, cap and hairpin style markers, mini (3") all copper marker.

Ideal Garden Markers, 19 Mid Oaks Rd, Roseville MN 55113; 651-398-8958. Combination stainless steel post and UV resistant plastic nameplate, custom printed labels, and custom engraved botanic garden grade acrylic labels, Decocolor paint pens.

Iris City Gardens, 7675 Younger Creek Rd, Primm Springs TN 38476; 800-934-4747. Well known iris nursery; rose style markers with stainless steel post and zinc coated aluminum name plates.

Kincaid Plant Markers, 11000 County Rd 366, Savannah MO 01833; 816-324-4931. High quality all stainless steel rose style markers, Markal paint pens, custom printed labels, Brother printing products.

Luster Leaf Gardening Products, 2220 Techcourt, Woodstock IL 60098; 815-337-5560 / 800-327-4635. Copper & zinc metal markers in rose and cap style, all copper ornamental T marker, wood (various heights), plastic T and stick style markers in various heights

Paw Paw Everlast Label Co., PO Box 93, Paw Paw MI 49079-0093; 269-657-4921. Since 1937; the originator of the rose, cap, hairpin, and flag designs; arguably the most widely distributed marker. The rose and cap style designs are much copied and offered in a variety of metals, often of heavier and more durable construction. Prices vary with volume. Choice of markers: galvanized, stainless steel, copper, or zinc in a range of styles: rose, cap, hairpin, flag, and swinging (signpost), mini marker, tie-on tags, & labeling pens.

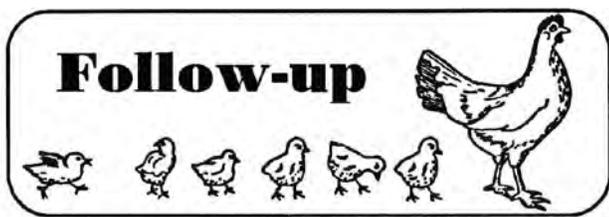
Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply, PO Box 2209, Grass Valley, CA 95945; 530-272-4769. Wood, plastic T & stick style marker, cap style (zinc & copper), marking pencils and pens.

See Fine Flower Markers, 1314 Alder Lane, Lewiston ID 83501; 208-413-6238. Heavy Duty Botanical Garden grade galvanized markers.

Tindara Orchid Supplies, 30 Spofford St, Georgetown MA 01833. Plastic T and stick style markers (various colors), cap style with galvanized post and copper or zinc name plates.

Wildwood Gardens, 3326 S Dickey Prairie RD, Molalla OR 97038; 503-829-3102; <rebloomingiris.com>. Well known iris grower, custom printed labels.





Another Garden Marker Option By Kristen Hart

As another growing season comes to a close here in Northern Michigan, my mind goes to planning and improving next year's garden. A large part of what we do, as historic iris growers, is help to preserve old irises that would otherwise fall by the wayside and become lost. A key component of keeping these irises safe is assuring identities are not lost. What's the best way to not lose an identity? Markers!

In the Spring 2018 issue there was a large write-up that gave many options and ideas for labeling our beloved irises. Since the labels and markers that I use were not listed in that article, I wanted to tell you about them and my success with them.

Let me start by saying that I have tried a variety of markers and labels over the years. It's only been the last few years that I've found the perfect fit for my garden. I live in a particularly harsh climate. We get loads of snow and ice, rain and wind, and bitter cold temperatures (I live in growing zone 3). I've had troubles with markers becoming brittle and breaking in the extreme cold. I've had major problems with labels fading. Who hasn't? It's just so hard to find the perfect marker. Well, I think I've found just the trick, for me anyway.

The markers I use now have made it through at least three winters without bending or breaking. I couldn't be more pleased with their performance. They are Bond #342 Re-useable 8" T-Markers. I buy them at Lowe's. They are very reasonable at about \$2.00 for a package of 25 markers.

I had trouble the first year with labeling them, as I was using Sharpie and Sharpie Extreme markers. Regardless of which I used, they would fade within a short time and be almost unreadable by the end of the season. Then my husband found a paint pen at the auto parts store and decided to get it for me to try on my markers. What a great guy!

This particular paint pen is amazing. It's a Forney #70819 Black Paint Marker. They are a little harder to find locally, but can be bought online for less than \$10. I've written over 500 labels with one paint pen, so it's well worth the money. They can be a little tricky to work with at times, spilling paint if you push too hard on the tip or are working in hot conditions, but they absolutely do not fade. My iris markers labeled with this pen, after two full growing seasons and an awful winter, look as good as the day I wrote them. Amazing.

One last thought: In addition to these markers, I always put a marker of some kind underground at the base of the plant. It doesn't matter so much what you use below ground, as long as it won't rot. It's just a good safety net in case something runs off with your above ground label. I've had deer and coyotes move mine. Who knew critters liked to organize gardens?

I hope next season is your best ever! ☺



Editor's note: On Kristen's recommendation, I tried these T-markers and pens this summer. I'm pleased with the results so far. There's room on the back to write the breeder and year, if you wish, and as you see, I've written the source on the stem of the marker. The charming 'Magyar Medley' (Edinger, 1999) is now part of my permanent collection, so it has a Kincaid marker, but like Kristen, I hedge my bets with extra markers. I'll let you know how they make it through our winter.