
Plant Labels: What You Need to Know

- The label should include the common name and Latin name of the plant. Since common names vary considerably, researching the Latin name can give you a more accurate description of the plant.
- Make note of the USDA or Sunset zone that's listed on the label. Don't buy a plant that's not rated for your zone, unless you want to do a little experimental growing — for example, if you live in Zone 6, you may want to take a chance on a plant that's hardy only to Zone 7 by putting it in a protected area.
- If the label doesn't mention heat tolerance, find out the southernmost zone the plant can tolerate (you can research this easily at home by googling the Latin name).
- Note the recommended planting conditions (type of soil, light requirement, water needs, mature size, etc.) before you buy.
- Be sure you can offer the recommended spacing so the plant has room to grow out as well as up.
- A plant that's referred to as “tender” should be treated as a houseplant unless you live in a warm climate.
- “Full sun” typically means at least six hours or more of sun.