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## **Eco-friendly tags offer sustainable alternative**

Bob Lovejoy, president of Horticultural Identification Products (HIP) offers some background on sustainable tagging solutions.

In an era when everyone is monitoring the impact of individual and collective carbon footprints, our industry stands the chance to lead other trades in creating new ways to protect the environment.

Horticultural Identification Products (HIP) strives to remain at the forefront of the “green” revolution in the horticulture industry by advancing its sustainable product offer for eco-conscious growers, retailers and consumers.

At HIP, we believe that the “earth-friendly” marketing and merchandising products we create, combined with the innovative “green” product offerings produced by container manufacturers, provide both growers and retailers with an opportunity to satisfy consumers’ environmental-related demands through a profitable, premium product combination. The union of green labeling, green pots and plant material makes for a sustainable solution in today’s environment-conscious world.

Through the development of environmentally friendly substrates for horticultural labeling production, HIP has added a family of alternative materials for custom-designed tags and labels. Currently, HIP offers three eco-friendly labeling solutions for a grower’s particular marketing needs:

BioTag is a first-of-its-kind tag made of biodegradable plastic. The BioTag material is produced using a state-of-the-art polymer technology that relies on bio-based products, such as corn and soybeans, rather than fossil fuel-based resins. The end-product has a natural composition that is totally biodegradable. The degradation process takes approximately one year.

EcoTag is a degradable alternative to traditional plastic plant tags. Manufactured using wind power as one energy source, EcoTag is environmentally-friendly from beginning to end with plenty of consumer appeal during its useful life. These rigid tags retain their integrity until buried in compost or disposed of in a landfill. The buried tags disintegrate in one to five years.

Repel is a durable, yet water-resistant, paper tag material containing 30% post-consumer waste, making it an environmentally-responsible choice for growers and garden centers. The Repel product exceeds expectations of traditional paper tags by retaining its original strength when exposed to water and sunlight. Compared to traditional synthetic tag materials, Repel reduces the energy inputs of trees, water and fuel, while decreasing the waste outputs of solid waste, air pollutants and wastewater.

These sustainable tag and labeling products produced by HIP also contribute to the brand image of a horticulture company, not only enhancing the look of plant products, but also conveying a corporate commitment to environmental awareness and the conservation of natural resources.

Today’s consumers want to know how the product’s packaging was created as well as detailed information about the product components which have been developed using sustainable practices. Savvy garden center shoppers are seeking answers to questions such as “Was this tag material fashioned through wind power or alternative energy source, or through traditional production methods?”

HIP will continue to develop new sustainable labeling and packaging materials for its stable of eco-friendly tag products, meaning that future products may be environmentally friendly in one of five ways: recycled, recyclable, degradable, biodegradable, natural, or agri-based.

One manageable change in environmental practices at a time, we can hopefully make a greener world together. In doing our small part to save and preserve our surroundings, I believe each of us is helping to create a more sustainable world for

the generations to follow.

-- Bob Lovejoy

Bob Lovejoy is the president of Horticultural Identification Products (HIP), a customized tag and labeling products company dedicated to providing creative marketing solutions to the horticulture industry. Based outside of Greensboro, N.C., in Thomasville, HIP is known nationwide for satisfying horticultural identification and marketing needs of all types, from creative conceptualization to final production.

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