

Dear Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour Hosts,

Thank you for offering your garden for the upcoming Tour! I am writing now to remind you to label your native plants. Below are examples of labels other hosts have made, and their instructions for doing so.

Your labels should:

- 1) Have a large font (at least 14 point)
- 2) Be numerous (visitors should not have to search for a label)
- 3) And preferably, contain both the Latin and common name

Labeling only one specimen of a plant that occurs in many sections of the garden is not sufficient.

Visitors to your garden will want to know what plants are native, and what the plant names are. They'll also want to know what is blooming when they visit your garden—whether it is native or not. So, if you have a non-native that will be in flower it would be best if you also label it, and note on the label that it is non-native. (Maybe use a different paper color, or highlight “non-native”.)

Gardens that have their plants labeled routinely receive rave reviews from guests; the few suggestions/complaints I see on the evaluations are about gardens where the plants weren't labeled.

Having your plants labeled is important enough that gardens that don't have their plants labels will not be invited to participate in future Tours.

Labeling your plants will not only make the day of the tour more enjoyable and informative for your guests, it will also make the day easier for you, as you won't be saying, “It's a Douglas iris,” all day.

Tour guests tend to be very directed: many of them are currently working on, or plan to transform, their own gardens. If your plants aren't labelled your garden can't help visitors with their plant choices.

Another reason to label your plants is that some guests have reported on their evaluations that they thought some of the gardens were

weedy—it turns out that they were seeing, but not recognizing, native grasses. (In fact, once, during a post-tour conversation, a man said to me, “My wife and I enjoyed the tour, but we wondered, “Don’t you have any *criteria* for these gardens?” After some discussion, I figured out what “weedy” garden they were talking about, and realized that the garden they thought was so unkempt contained a lot of purple needlegrass!)

You are welcome to make labels as simple as popsicle sticks stuck in the ground, or labels that are more informative, as you think best. In hopes this is useful, below are photographs of various kinds of garden labels hosts have purchased or made, and instructions from hosts describing how they made the labels for their plants.

It is best to laminate your labels, so they can be put out days ahead of time, and also so they won’t be ruined if it is sprinkling or raining on the day of the Tour.

When your labels have been made, here is a tip that will make your life a lot easier. Prior to the Tour, separate your plant labels out by garden section. (For example, group and rubber band together the labels that will go to the left of the walkway, those that will go to the right, and those that will go on the parking strip. This will make it much easier and faster to put the labels out.)

Below are three ways you can label your plants. They are:

- labels you can purchase
- labels made on a computer, and
- labels made by hand

Please let me know if I can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Kathy
(510) 236-9558 (landline)

1) Purchasing plant labels

You can see these labels in person at the Sugarloaf Native Plant Garden, 2161 Young’s Valley Road, Walnut Creek. They are:

Kincaid Plant Markers

[Kincaid Plant Markers – Made for a lifetime of gardening](#)

Steel Marker: 2A-10

[Labels: TZe-355](#)

Gary is the contact at: support@kincaidgardens.com

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Maria Dawson's labels, Livermore

Hi Kathy,

Our labels are definitely a bit of investment, but we love them and they have been working great! We leave them out all year long and they still look practically new (many have been out for almost 5 years now). This is how ours are configured but there are other options!

Custom engraved labels:

https://store.kincaidplantmarkers.com/Our_Products-Custom_Engraving.html

(With two holes to match the DL posts)

Using the DL series posts:

<https://store.kincaidplantmarkers.com/designer-series-posts>

(DL-size-quantity)

Kincaid Markers website for other options:

<https://www.kincaidplantmarkers.com/>

Maria





2) Making labels on your computer

Mike May and Kathy Kramer's label instructions can be seen [here](#). We bought hummingbird, butterfly, bees, and bird stickers on Amazon and used them to identify plants that were especially good for wildlife. We also indicated whether a plant was locally native.

Local Native



Scarlet Monkeyflower

Mimulus cardinalis

Attracts buckeye butterflies and hummingbirds.



Local Native



Naked Buckwheat

Eriogonum nudum

Attracts bumble and honey bees, and dotted blue butterflies. quail eat the leaves, house finches, dark-eyed juncos, bell sparrows, and towhees eat the seeds.



Local Native



California Rose

Rosa californica

Attracts mourning cloak butterflies; California thrashers, towhees, goldfinches, and quail.



Local Native



Hedge Nettle

Stachys ajugoides

Attracts bees and Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds.





Local Native

Coffeeberry
Rhamnus californica

Attracts echo blue butterflies.



Pamela Fox's instructions for making labels using CalScape: see Pamela's blog, where her instructions are posted, [here](#).



Al Kyte's labels

Hi Kathy,

I'm pretty low tech, but here is what I do for labels. For paper I use tan 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of stiff art paper. That size will usually print up 5 or 6 labels per sheet, which are then cut to the size I want. The stiff art paper I use will go through my printer. I use #28 Tahoma bold font for the plant's common name and #28 Tahoma italic font for the Latin name to give me print large enough for people to see.

I don't have a laminator, so just buy sheets or rolls of self-adhesive laminating paper at Staples. I laminate each label individually and attach each one to a bamboo plant stake (available at nurseries) angle-cut at the bottom; most of the stakes are cut to be about nine inches long.

The label is attached to the bamboo stake on the back side with tan duct tape. I put the labels in the ground by first hammering a huge nail into the ground, then remove the nail, and insert the bamboo stake in the previously-made hole. In that way I don't damage the bamboo stakes by hammering on them directly. - Al





Kevin Callahan's signs. (There are no instructions, but this is a nice example of additional information you could put on your signs.)

Native

Evergreen

Heteromeles arbutifolia

TOYON

Flowers in Summer-bees and insects

Red berries in Fall-birds

Native

Evergreen

Rhamnus californica – Eve Case

COFFEEBERRY

Inconspicuous yellow flowers in Spring.

Nectar for swallowtail and hairstreak

butterflies. Deep purple berries in Fall

3. Making simple labels by hand

Stefanie Pruegel's signs

Hi Kathy,

My signs were kind of a low-budget solution, but I think they work. I am attaching a few photos for your "signage ideas and instructions file" for new tour participants.

Here's what I bought:

- 1. Bamboo sticks from Home Depot, 12 per bag, under \$4 per bag.** I cut them into different lengths with loppers to use for short/medium/tall plants. I think I had 4 bags for my whole yard, and I had close to 100 signs.
- 2. Index cards 4x6, available at Walgreens or other drug store/supermarkets**
- 3. Wooden clothes pins, bag of 100, under \$5 (also from Home Depot, I think)**

I used a black sharpie to write plant names on the cards. I marked non-native plants with a red sharpie.

I went around the yard pushing the sticks in the ground the night before the tour but didn't place the labels until the next morning so they wouldn't get soggy/droopy overnight.

Note! Stefanie didn't have her labels laminated at first: then, sadly, it rained on the day of the Tour. She has since laminated her plant labels. I encourage all of you to start early, and laminate your labels.



Ruth Rogow's plant stakes

Ruth bought forks from thrift shops, and used them as stakes.

(Note: I have a heavy laminate on my plant signs, and am not sure the fork method would work for them - Kathy.)



Growing Natives Garden Tour - here is the information the South Bay's native garden tour provides to their hosts

Plant labels are needed as native plants are still unfamiliar to many of our visitors. Plant identification also frees up homeowners and docents to answer questions that are more general.

If making your own labels use size 14 or larger font, and keep the signage 4" x 6" or smaller. Include scientific and common names. If desired, you can add additional plant info or photos. Photos and native plant info can be obtained from [Calscape](#) or nursery websites such as [Yerba Buena Nursery](#).

Here are several ideas for plant labels:

1. Most expensive and most permanent: Botanical plant labels from [Precision Sign Systems](#). The signs are priced from \$3.80 up, signs and stakes from \$7.35 up.
2. Metal markers from [Kincaid Plant Markers](#), [Lee Valley Tools](#), [Burpee's](#), [Metal Garden Markers](#), or [Everlast](#). Search online for sources, or check your local nursery. You can use a label machine (such as a Brother P-Touch with TZ tape - Costco is selling them!) to print laminated labels to stick on them. You can also write on these with permanent pencil.
3. Microsoft Word has a "mail merge" function (under Tools) that allows you to use a list of plant names and related info (in an Excel spreadsheet) to incorporate into labels. Use 4 x 6 cardstock with the envelope function and maybe add a photo of the plant in bloom. Or use the label function, perhaps with the '5164 shipping label' template, which will give 6 labels per page. Print to heavy paper and trim to size with a paper cutter. To make this more permanent, get them laminated. [Lakeshore Learning](#) (a store with children's educational toys on Bascom Ave. in San Jose) has a 3 foot wide laminator where you can do it yourself for only about 20 cents an inch. Attach cards to popsicle sticks with staples, or insert into 1/2" x 6" bamboo stakes that have been split at the top.
4. River stones can be written on with a permanent paint pen. These pens, made by Elmers, Rustoleum and others, can be purchased from craft stores and hardware stores. You can always hide the sign when not needed by inverting the stone!