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Materials

Labels: popsicle sticks, paper, cardboard, clothespins, pebbles, old wooden spoons, and anything else you can upcycle into plant labels

Markers

Paint, tape, sticks (optional depending on your choice of label material)



FIGURE 5-1 Skewers make great stakes to hold any plant label



Local Food Program

UPCYCLED PLANT LABELS

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Gardeners will often find themselves with at least a few different types of plants in their care - often times many more! They might be growing twenty different kinds of vegetables, or have a home with a dozen types of houseplants, or they could even be growing many different varieties of the SAME thing! Did you know that there are over 3,000 official varieties of Tulip flowers? Plants can look pretty confusing in a farm or garden since they often look similar. To make it easier to spot a plant, a gardener will make plant labels.

GETTING STARTED

A label is a sign or name tag that gardeners give to their plants to help them remember where (and maybe when) they planted a certain crop or plant. Different crops need different amounts of light and water. They have different pest management strategies, different harvest times, different soil requirements, and so much more! Labels are a great way to remember which plant you're growing at any given time so that you can give it the specific type of care that it needs. Plant labels are something that anyone can make for their plants - even if you've only got one plant that you're taking care of!



FIGURE 2 Simple chalkboard labels can be reused over and over again

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ACTIVITY

1. Start with a walk around your garden/home to see which plants need a label.
2. Using the markers or paint, write down the name of each plant on a separate label (for example, "Tomato" or "Marigold"). If you know the specific variety of plant, you can include that on the label as well (for example, Pepper - California Wonder). If you have more than one of a certain type of plant, you can make separate labels for each one.
3. Get creative with your plant labels! You can draw a picture of what the plant looks like or a picture of what you think the plant will look like when it's fully

- grown. You can write down the date that it was planted so that you can keep track of how long it's been growing and so that (if it's a fruit or vegetable) you can estimate how much longer it will be before it's ready to harvest. You can also give the plant a nickname that's silly or serious, depending on how you feel.
4. When you're done, stick each label in the soil beside/near the plant that it goes with. If you need to, gather some sticks and tape your labels to them so that they can be easily placed in the soil next to the plants.