

2. A method of using tags to mark crossed ears at pollination and at harvest in maize.

Before the pollination season begins, we staple a tag, 4.5 cm x 7.5 cm, from 200 lb. tagboard, on the inside of the fold at one side and between the middle and the closed end of each pollination bag. When a cross is made, the culture and plant number of the male parent and the date are written on the lower half of the tag, together with any information needed to describe the female and the male parents. The bag is then placed over the ear and stapled around the stalk. We usually omit the culture number of the female parent at the time the cross is made, or add only the plant number of the female parent in the upper right corner of the tag. The pencil we use is: Eagle Veriblack #315. It is a soft pencil with a thick lead, but many tags can be written before sharpening is needed. As soon as the crossing is completed, the culture numbers for the female parent are stamped on the upper half of the tag.

At the time of harvest, the tag is removed from the tassel bag and nailed on the ear, using a common lath nail, or a brad with a somewhat larger head. A small oval-shaped stone that is easy to carry substitutes for a hammer. The ears should be laid out on trays for drying. If placed in a bag, the tags may come off in handling.

The method described has several advantages: 1. Stapling the tag on the inside fold of the tassel bag usually protects the tag from weathering and rubbing against other plants which might make the numbers illegible. Very few are lost from that source. After the female culture and plant numbers are added, a tassel bag that is blown off but not lost can be returned to the proper plant. 2. The method avoids the need for copying to transfer information to the ear at the time of harvest. This avoids one source of errors. 3. The nail can be driven into the moist cob easily at the time of harvest. Rubber bands were used in some laboratories, but these disintegrate after a few years.

Chas. R. Burnham