

What's in a Name?

Problems arise when shopping for a particular plant, bulb, or tree that all have the same common name. Unless you know the botanical name, it might be hard to figure out which "Pink lady" you are talking about.

Recently, I searched to find information on the net about the care of "Pink lady" lilies that come from a type of bulbs I intended to replant.

Little did I know that I would find information on Pink lady apples, Pink lady orchids, Pink lady gladiolus, Pink lady quince but sadly, no information on Pink lady lilies.

Finally, I found pink lilies, lots of pink lilies, but no pink *lady* lilies. Not one of the splendid pink lily pictures appearing on my computer screen looked like mine.

Then, I made a discovery.

Pink lady lilies have another common name, Naked lady. Wanting *any* degree of mastery over this riddle, I thought it might be a naked lady that is a pink cultivar, or naked pink lady, or a naughty variety of naked lady, or the *only* variety of a blushing pink lady.

I cannot really say.

My research was just beginning.

The Latin-based official name, which every plant has (or will get once its discovered) whether its found in a remote corner of the Amazon jungle or my backyard, is the same around the world.

Might I suppose that *not* using the botanical name was the missing link, the fastener needed to narrow my search and stop the silliness?

Without fully answering this question, I will veer readers into yet another discovery.

Common names can vary from region to region, country to country or person to person. The botanical names, however, are used world wide and are rarely subject to change therefore minimizing or eliminating misinterpretations.

If we look beyond the irksome botanical names for plants, (common names can be irksome too) a very simple classification system is revealed. All plants are identified according to a binomial system--*bi* meaning two, *nom* meaning name. So all plants have two names **genus** and the **species**.

Using the binomial system of botanical names give us a method for identifying plants accurately at a minimum risk of error and confusion. Botanical names do more than

provide plant names. It is part of a systemic plan that provides a key to identification that gives vital clues and requirements of the plant.

As a basic introduction, a sample of botanical names and definitions are listed in chart below:

Flower and foliage colors

aurea, aureo	golden
alba, albo	white
glauc	blue
rubra	red
purpurea, atropurpurea	purple
coccineus	scarlet
croceus	yellow

Leaf shapes and forms

angustifolius	narrow leaves
acerifolius	maple-like leaves
aquifolius	spiny leaves
buxifolius	boxwood-like leaves
ilicifolius	holly-like leaves
parvifolius	small leaves
macrophylla	large leaves
heterophylla	varied size leaves

Plant shapes and habits

altus	tall
arboreus	tree-like
compactus	compact, dense
contortus	twisted
elegans	slender, willowy
humilis	small, low growing
nanus	dwarf
procumbens	trailing
repens, reptans	creeping
scandens	climbing
marginata	variegated margins
variegata	variegated foliage
bicolor	two color blend of variegation
tricolor	three color blend of variegation
pendula	weeping growth
zebrinus	striped

Plant parts and descriptions

dendron	tree-like
flora, florum, florus	flowers
phyllus, phylla, folia	leaves
baccatus	having berries
campan	bell
rotund	round
cordatus	heart shaped
edulis	edible
floridus	free flowering
fulgens	shiny
grandi	large, showy
macro	large
micro	small
officinalis	medicinal
plumosus	feathery
rugosus	wrinkled, rough

Place of origin or discovery

africanus	native to Africa
alpinus	native to alpine regions
campestris	native to plains and fields
canadensis	native to Canada
canariensis	native to the Canary Islands
chinesis	native to China
japonicus	native to Japan

Incidentally, the botanical name of Naked lady is *Amaryllis Belladonna*. She is a native of South Africa. Her blooms appear in many colors.

See web site www.botany.com which provides information on common names of plants, botanical names of plants, dictionary of botanical words, leaf shapes and more.

May your searching be fruitful and your blessings be many.

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