



Basic Nomenclature

The Goal:
A Standardized Name for Each Plant

Common Names



Scarlet gilia, skyrocket,
skunk flower, honeysuckle

- Have evolved over centuries in a multitude of languages.
- Sometimes only used in a limited geographic area.
- The plant may be known by several different names.
- The same name may apply to several different plants.

Scientific Names



- One and only one name for each plant.
- Only one language: Latin.

Ipomopsis aggregata

Why bother learning scientific names?

“My plants grow just fine without me knowing their scientific name”

“I sound pretentious”

“I can’t pronounce it”

“I’m too old to learn them now”

“What difference does it make?”



Scientific names tell you a lot

The name is often descriptive

arborescens – tree like
repens – creeping
scandens - climbing
foetidus - foul-smelling
palustris - of the marsh
sempervirens - always green
trilobata – three lobed



Rhus trilobata

Many scientific names are familiar

Yucca

Pinus

Tulipa

Rosa

Cotoneaster

Primula

Hyacinthus

Viola

Juniperus

Lavendula

Rosmarinus

Okay, so it's not always so easy ...

- Cultivars
- Hybrids
- Trademark names
- Taxonomic reclassification

Cultivars

- A selection of a plant chosen for specific characteristics. May be from a wild population or from cultivation. Cultivars are preserved through propagation.



Cylindropuntia whipplei 'Snow Leopard'

Hybrids

- Cross between two genera, species or cultivars.



Campsis x tagliabuana 'Madame Galen'
Selection of a cross between:
Campsis radicans x *Campsis grandiflora*

Photo by Tracy Neal

And some plants also have a
trademarked name



Agastache cana 'Sinning' Sonoran Sunset™

Old and new names

Current name

- *Cupressus arizonica*
- *Escobaria vivipara*
- *Festuca brachyphylla*
- *Forestiera pubescens* var.
pubescens

Recently current name

- *Callitropsis arizonica*
- *Coryphantha vivipara*
- *Festuca ovina*
- *Forestiera neomexicana*