

(Extracted from an explanatory paper on the principle of the Popular British Flora). 45
To render the present Flora more useful to a large number of botanical amateurs who may not be familiar with the Latin language, I have felt the necessity of making use of English names, at least for the species, and as far as practicable, for the genera also, adding only the Latin ones as a guide to their concordance with more scientific works.

My first intention was merely to have taken the English names from Hooker and Arnott's British Flora as our standard work; and upon conference with Professor Heywood I found that such had also been his intention in those works for elementary instruction in Botany, in which he also found it necessary to adopt an English nomenclature.

But here the same difficulty occurred to both of us. The English substantive names in the British Flora are not strictly generic, but, in most cases, trivial names given in popular language to one or more species or varieties of plants without reference to their botanical genera. And although in many instances an attempt has there been made, by extending or restricting the popular sense of these names, or by the addition of one or more adjectives, to produce a vague systematic nomenclature; yet, as it is not relied on for use, it is not attempted to reduce it to the Linnean rules.

Thus we find:

One name applied to two or more very distant genera as Coralroot to *Dentaria* and *Corallorrhiza*, Lovestrife to *Cyphium* and *Symphytum*, Nightshade to *Arisaema* and *Solanum*, Wintergreen to *Pyrrola* and *Ficaria*, Chickweed to *Malachium* *Holosteum* & *Cerastium* (but not for a generic name) to *Melloria* which contains the common Chickweed.

Two three or more names given to one genus as Crowfoot and Spearwort, Spurred Dropwort and Meadowweet, Pericaria, Bistort, Knotgrass and Buckheat.

Substantive or adjective names or both consisting of two or more words giving such long winded names as Hydrop-leaved purple Lovestrife, Hedge-bastard & stone Barley, Wormseed Treacle Mustard, Sulphurwort Water Dropwort, Bulbiferous great roundheaded Garlic, European Chickweed Watercress, Sint-leaved bastard Toadflax, and creeping pale blue Toadflax, one being a *Thlaspi* the other a *Senecio* - to the great confusion of substantives and adjectives, of names and of epithets, of trivial and scientific names as well as of botanical affinities.

Names particularly indicative of one natural order or group made use of in the formation of the generic names of very different families. *Grass* is applied to *Cockscomb*, *Ischaemum*, *Gonium*, *Treng�ckia*, *Eriophorum* and a number of others, *Hesperis* to *Hesperis*, *Scutellaria* to *Scutellaria*, most of the *Cyperaceae* are called *Rushes*, whilst the *Acorus* is termed a *Pedge* etc.

The generic names or names given at the head of the genera not always applied to all the species & *coextens* included in it as in the case of *Bartsia*, *Hedysarum*, *Urtica acaulis* & *inflata*, *Hypericum androsaemum* etc.

Instances similar to the above might be very much multiplied & have felt myself justified in concluding that there was no intention in the above work of framing a regular English nomenclature for practical use, an operation which yet remains to be performed. In making the attempt I have endeavoured to keep in view the following rules
for generic names,

1. To adopt established popular names wherever they can be readily applied to all the species included in the botanical genera and are not otherwise objectionable as, Oak, Willow, Hawthorn, Chestnut, Laburnum etc.

2. When the popular names are inapplicable or objectionable to take the Latin generic name as English. Many of these Latin names are already familiar to all who have gardens as *Eleagnus*, *Ranunculus*, *Camassia* or *Geranium* Box etc, and the remainder are as easily learned as any other ones we could devise, besides those who would go a step further in botany they are names which must be learned to prefer to almost any botanical work. Where these Latin names are long I have sometimes endeavoured to render them more easy by cutting off a syllable in the termination as *Corydal*, *Artemesia*, *Hyacinthus*, *Heuchera* etc. It has been suggested to me that this might be carried much farther in imitation of the French, but it is not so much in the generic name of our language and might lead to a disagreeable affectation.

The generic names repeated as objectionable for genera

1 All those exclusively designating some species only of the genera, for it is not English to call an Apple a Pear or a Cherry a Plum. The *Cloudberry* is neither a Bramble nor a Raspberry, *Pedicularis* (properly ladies' tresses) a name suggested probably by the appearance of down covered with the golden flowers of *Giliastrum verum*, is as inapplicable to *Gilia apiculata*, as is the name of *Leaves* to *G. verum*. In some cases such as *Cowfoot* I have had some hesitation but as it is not very applicable either to our wild *A. laevis* & *flavescens* or to the garden *A. sativa* I have preferred using in English as well as Latin the name of *Ranunculus*, already so familiar in gardens among gardeners.

2 All names consisting of two words, not only from the inconvenience of their length but as leading to the greatest ambiguity whether one of the words is specific or part of the generic name, more especially as in these cases the substantive part of the double name is that of some very different genus such as Dog-rose, Water-flax, Spurge-leaved, Black-bryony etc.

Exceptions to this rule are where the two words are so completely contrasted as not even to require the insertion of a hyphen such as the compound of weed, wort, berry, nut etc. Every where the principal word in the compound would by itself be indicative of a distinct genus, ^{the name} it may not be objectionable if indicative of the order or tribe to which the genus belongs named by the compound word belongs such as Rock-rose and Water-fern in *Convolvulus* Wood-fern in *pteris* Speckle-grass in *Gramineae* etc. A further exception might be made in favor of a few words so fully engrrafted in the language that the sense of the integral parts is in some measure lost sight of as in Water-lily, Buttercup etc.

3. A few so-called English names to be found perhaps in some old herbals but unknown in common language applied indeed to plants too rare or too insignificant to have acquired a trivial name. For where an unknown name must be learned, it is as well at once to learn the scientific one. Many rejected on this account are Cypel, Madwort, Mudwort, Bladder etc.

4. A small number of dirty or disgusting names. For although I do not see the necessity of calling attention to the indecent derivations of some of the Latin names of older botanists, ^{especially} of those in *perfumerie* because *Senecio* *acris* by changing their names on that account, it is a very different thing in settling a botanical language for common use to introduce the coarse terms of the middle ages into the more refined vocabulary of the present day. *Pedicularis* suggests no idea but that of the plant so called, Lovewort can scarcely be used without recalling disgraceful associations.

As to specific names the rule is that they should be English one-worded adjectives with however the following exceptions:

1 Where the species has a well known popular name not too long nor too absurd, ^{such as} for it gives the facility of speaking of the species in common language by the single specific denomination when no reference to its botanical affinities is needed. Then I would adopt in our scientific nomenclature the names of Latin *Hypericum*, *apple* *Pyrus*, *service* *Byrus*, *rowan* *Byrus* etc which we would commonly call the *turban* the *apple* the *service* the *rowan* etc (not mountain) but ask which it would be very desirable to abolish (possibly altogether) but I should not propose to take up the *go-to-bed-at-midnight* the *pitchy* the *hedge* *alliance* or the *fairmaids* of *February* *snowdrop*.

2 Where a simple English adjective is not sufficiently explicit a compound one must be retained in English as in *Lathyrus* *large-flowered* - *long-leaved* which cannot be rendered by *large* alone. In some cases when the adjective *leaved* may be omitted *Willow* *lipsia* and *wy* *monia* may do or well enough *willow-leaved* or *wy-leaved* for the resemblance it derives from something

more than the leaves, but generally speaking I have found it necessary to retain the -leaved.

Where specific names already proposed are unobjectionable the rule of priority of course requires their adoption, but then the question arises, if the English ~~new~~ specific names in the British Flora are at variance with the established Latin ones to which does the rule of priority apply. Had the English nomenclature been regularly established the preference should certainly have been given to it in all cases, but more and more ~~now~~ ~~now~~ as it is, perhaps a little more latitude may be allowed where a closer approximation to the meaning of the Latin one seems desirable.

Names adopted for Ranunculaceae

<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Common Clematis	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	Marsh Colchicum
<i>Malotrum alpinum</i>	Alpine Malotrum	<i>Gentianella lutea</i>	Globe Gentian
mimus	Lipper	<i>Helleborus viridis</i>	Green Hellebore
flower	Yellow	<i>Galanthus plicatus</i>	Starburst —
<i>Anemone pulsatilla</i>	Pasque Anemone	<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	Common Columbine
nemorosa	Wood	<i>Delphinium consolida</i>	Field Larkspur
<i>Adonis autumnalis</i>	Corn Adonis	<i>Aconitum Napellus</i>	Common Aconite
<i>Myrrhis minima</i>	Common Myrrhis	<i>Actaea spicata</i>	Common Baneberry
<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>	Water Ranunculus	<i>Paeonia corallina</i>	Coral Peony
liniger	Great		
ophioglossifolius	Snake-tongue		
flavum	Spear		
fissaria	Drooping		
curvicaulis	Wood		
sceleratus	Celery-leaved		
acris	Acer		
repens	Creeping		
bulbosus	Bulbous		
monotropus	Hairy		
avicularis	Corn		

however of not sticking so much to precision as he does, and would say for instance Berberanthus instead of Berberidacanthus 91 Victoria Street S.W. May 28 / 57

My dear Grey The above extract and illustration and the enclosed specimen page of my Popular British Flora are the best answer I can give to the main query of your letter. I shall be glad to send you next winter the whole names of the Prof. H. if you will adopt them where species are identified. We go to Paris on the 19th June stay there 3 or 4 weeks then make a tour in the west of France and return here in October soon after which I shall begin printing.

In a parcel Foster is sending you I have put the 7 copies of the last sheet of St. Karto, & a part of Betula officinalis.

I forgot to look yesterday at his about *Philesia benthamiana* It is described I believe in the Prof. Soc. Journal (1850) and mentioned I think in *Illustration Hortive* — as to its being a good species I do not know — I hope not.

I shall be glad of any criticism on the specimen page as to type arrangement etc as well as matter. My idea in giving the general station of a species as well as the British distribution was to show how small a portion of the area of the species the British localities form and consequently how little important it is that a plant found, one year in Sussex should appear the next in Jersey, and rather to enlarge their contrast the idea of local botanists. I admit about 1200 species of plants that are above 1500. Daburys above 7000 but then many are not reductions of species but emendations of existing plants which never were really British

specimens were received George Bentham



Bentham, George. 1839. "Bentham, George undated [extract]." *George Bentham letters to Asa Gray*

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