

(Extracted from an explanatory paper on the principles of the Popular British Flora). 48
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 Henslow 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 their names or by the addition of one or more adjectives to produce a vague sort of 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*, Loosetrife to *Cythereum* and *Lysimachia*, Nightshade to *Livoxa* and *Solanum*, Wintergreen to *Pyrola* and *Frientalis*, Chickweed to *Malachium Holortum* & *Cerastium* but not (as a generic name) to *McKlaria* which contains the common Chickweed.

Two three or more names given to one genus as Crowfoot and Spearwort *Spiraea* Dropwort and Meadowweet, *Perricaea*, Bistort, Knotgrass and Broomrape.

Substantive or adjective names or both consisting of two or more words giving such long winded names as Hyop. leaved purple Loosetrife, Hedge bastard stone Parley, Wornseed treacle Mustard, Sulphurwort water Dropwort, Bulbiferous great roundheaded Garlic, European Chickweed Wintergreen, Sint leaved bastard Toadflax, and creeping pale blue Toadflax, one being a *Thesium* the other a *Linaria* - 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 thus Grass is applied to *Cochlearia*, *Draba*, *Lepidium* *Galium*, *Fragaria* *Ericophorum* and a number of others, Violet to *Hesperis*, Nettle to *Labiata*, most of the *Agnesceae* are called Rushes, whilst the *Acorus* is termed a Hedge st.

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 ~~was~~ 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 ~~it~~ certainly have been given to it in all cases, but more and more time as it is, perhaps a little more latitude may be allowed where a closer approximation to the meaning of the Latin one seems derivable.

Names adopted for Ranunculaceae

<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Common Clematis	<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh Caltha
<i>Thalictrum alpinum</i>	Alpine Thalictrum	<i>Frothius Europaeus</i>	Globe Frothius
<i>minus</i>	Lesser	<i>Helleborus viridis</i>	Green Hellebore
<i>flavus</i>	Yellow	<i>foetidus</i>	Stinking
<i>Anemone pulsatilla</i>	Pasque Anemone	<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	Common Columbian
<i>nemorosa</i>	Wood	<i>Delphinium consolida</i>	Field Larkspur
<i>Adonis autumnalis</i>	Corn Adonis	<i>Aconitum napellus</i>	Common Aconite
<i>Myorurus minimus</i>	Common Myorurus	<i>Actaea spicata</i>	Common Banewort
<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>	Water Ranunculus	<i>Paeonia corallina</i>	Coral Peony
<i>lingua</i>	Great		
<i>Ophio-glossifolius</i>	Snake-tongue		
<i>flammula</i>	Spear		
<i>ficaria</i>	Dropwort		
<i>anemone</i>	Wood		
<i>reclatus</i>	Clerg-leaved		
<i>aenis</i>	Aired		
<i>repens</i>	Creeping		
<i>bulbosus</i>	Bulbous		
<i>hircutus</i>	Hairy		
<i>acris</i>	Corn		

As to Natural Orders I had at first intended to call them the Ranunculaceae Family - the Barberry family etc as you do but as I have scolded everything in conjunction with J.D. Hooker & Henslow & Henslow stick much by his catly and Hooker rather like them I have given in and adopted them. I think

however of not sticking so much to purism as he does, and would say for instance Barberanth instead of Barberidanth 41 Victoria Street S.W. May 20/57

My dear Green 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 week the whole names of the Bot. H. if you will adopt them where species are identical. 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 Hooker is sending you I have put the 7 copies of the last sheets of Bot. H. & 2 parts of Bot. H. Miscellanea.

I forgot to look yesterday at Kew about *Prunella pentstemonifolia*. It is described I believe in the Bot. Soc. Journal (p. 200) and mentioned I think in *Plantae Hibernicae* - as to being a good species I do not know - I hope not.

I shall be glad of any criticisms 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 than contract the idea of local botany. I admit about 1200 y. exclusive of ferns that are above 1800. Scarborough above 2000 but then many are not reductions of species but mixtures of growths which never were really British yours ever sincerely George Dontham



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

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