

Preface

The process of selecting and naming cultivated plants is as old as human society itself, and the rise of civilization based on an agrarian society was in large measure dependent on the process. While plants of agricultural significance were the primary focus of attention, plants of strictly ornamental value were certainly not overlooked. Consequently, by 1629 John Parkinson (1567–1650) could author the first book devoted entirely to garden plants, *Paradisi in sole paradisus terrestris*, and enumerate the many variants that had been selected and perpetuated through propagation and cultivation in gardens. The tradition of documenting and describing cultivars has continued since Parkinson's time and in 1753 took—along with botanical nomenclature—a new turn with the introduction by Linnaeus of binomial nomenclature. It was at this point that the polynomial or phrase names used to refer to the different types of plants were replaced by a two-word name incorporating a generic name coupled with a specific epithet (for example, *Quercus alba*, our native white oak).

Subsequent to the time of Linnaeus, the plants intentionally selected by growers for a particular attribute or combination of attributes were accommodated within the botanical system of classification and named using the infraspecific ranks of *varietas* and *forma* (e.g., *Quercus robur* f. *fastigiata*, now *Q. robur* 'Fastigiata'). However, because it is these same ranks that botanists use to name naturally occurring variants in the world's spontaneous floras, ambiguity was inevitable. Did a particular varietal or forma name refer to a naturally occurring plant or to one selected for a combination of attributes and perpetuated only in cultivation by skilled propagators and knowledgeable gardeners?

As confusion mounted, it became necessary to establish two separate systems of nomenclature: one for botanists studying forms occurring in nature, and another for horticulturists selecting and naming plants for economic or ornamental value. With the publication in 1953 of the first edition of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (W. T. Stearn, 1953, London: RHS) the term *cultivar*, which merged the two words "cultivated variety" into one, was officially introduced to the horticultural world, and the rules governing the naming of cultivars were formally divorced from the rules for naming botanical taxa. Henceforth, plants selected for unique attributes of horticultural importance were to be given so-called "fancy" names in the vernacular (e.g., *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Tulsa'), whereas botanical epithets at the species and infraspecific ranks would continue to employ names in Latin format (e.g., *Magnolia acuminata* var. *subcordata*). Additionally, the new "cultivated code" provided for the designation of national and international registration authorities that would serve as clearing houses for monitoring the use of cultivar names, thus insuring that their formation and application followed the recommendations of the *Code*.

A further responsibility of registration authorities stipulated by the *Code* was the development of master checklists of cultivar names. This involved accounting for the

literature pertaining to each group or genus from the time of Philip Miller's *The Gardeners Dictionary* (sixth edition, 1752) onward. The goal was to produce master checklists of cultivar names—in both Latin that predated the “cultivated code” and the vernacular—in order to stabilize cultivar nomenclature and to avoid duplication of names. At the same time, lists of known synonyms and standard references for a given group of cultivated plants would be developed.

Over the years since 1953, a great deal of progress has been made in attempts to achieve these goals, and literally thousands of new cultivars have been named and introduced into the worldwide horticultural marketplace. Locating these published names in the literature and finding descriptions and checklists, however, is often a daunting task for the uninitiated, and tracing elusive cultivar names frequently leads to a dead end.

In providing an up-to-date listing of cultivar checklists and the widely diverse literature in which cultivar names and pertinent descriptions and illustrations can be found, Professor Tucker and his coauthors have provided a great service to horticultural science as well as garden historians and landscape architects involved in historic landscape preservation. This listing, moreover, gives us an indication of where we have been in the past and provides the basis for documentation of future developments in ornamental horticulture. The wealth of information contained in this listing is a particularly welcome summary of work to date inasmuch as a new, fourth edition of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* is due to appear later this year. Professor Tucker and his coauthors are to be congratulated for this unique and useful contribution.

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