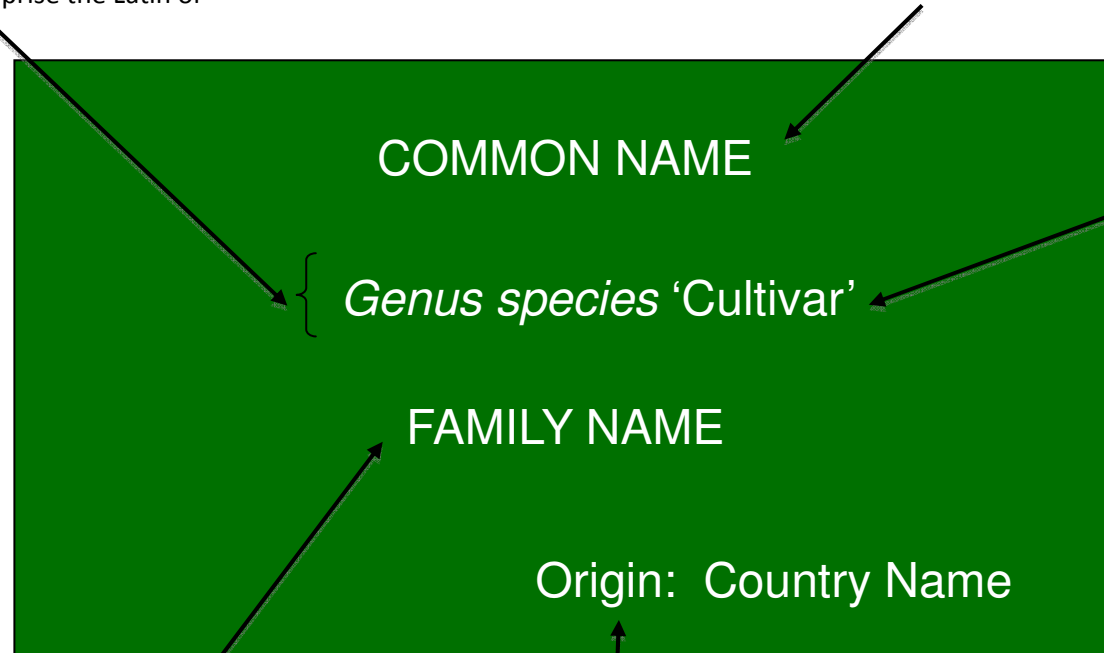


# HOW TO READ OLDS COLLEGE BOTANIC GARDENS PLANT LABELS

Genus is the lowest level of grouping – plants in the same genus share many characteristics. The species name applies to a specific plant. Both are written in italics and the genus name has the first letter capitalized.

The two words together comprise the Latin or Scientific plant name. This binomial system (two names) gives each plant a unique Latin name that is the same regardless of the language of the gardener.

There may be several common names for a particular plant so we have chosen the one most frequently used. The common name is that of the species, (unless the trademark name differs from a cultivar name.) Examples are included below.



Names after the species indicate a plant that differs from the species but not enough to be a different species. Examples include:

Cultivars – plants bred for characteristics such as colour, hardiness, size etc. Cultivar names are not italicized and have single quotes around them.

Subspecies (ssp.) – plants separated geographically developing different characteristics

Variety (var.) and forms (f.) – plants only slightly different from each other.

Hybrids (x) – plants created by cross-breeding (usually between species in the same genus) either in the wild or in the garden.

Genera names are grouped into Families – groups of plants with many shared characteristics, some more recognizable than others. A familiarity with common families can make the identification of an unknown plant somewhat easier. Most Family names end in 'aceae' for example Rosaceae (the Rose Family) Fabaceae (Pea Family) or Poaceae (Grass Family). The Family name is often printed in all caps to make it stand out (no italics).

Indicates the origin of the species.