

PSBI

Botanical Nomenclature

April 22, 2022

We held a zoom learning session last week with Susan Mintun. She gave us an overview of Botanical Nomenclature and how to use it when naming your artwork. The recording is available to PSBI members who missed the program. These notes will also help you to label your artwork with the scientific name of the plant(s) you depict.

Here is a synopsis of the rules:

Genus and species names must be written in *italics* (or underlined if hand-written.)

Genus names must begin with a capital (upper case) letter.

Species names must begin with a small (lower case) letter.

In order to understand these basic rules it may help to know a little more. All living things have a scientific name. These names are based on the Latin language. With plants we call this Botanical Nomenclature. Botanical names are important because common names are different in different spoken languages. Also, common names in one geographical area can refer to a completely different plant in another area, even when the spoken language is the same. An English bluebell has the botanical name *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, while a bluebell in Virginia is a different plant, *Mertensia virginica*.

The International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN) governs the way in which botanical names are written or printed. It states that scientific names (including botanical names) must be italicized (or underlined if hand-written.)

The botanical name has two parts. The first word is the name of the genus, and the second word is the specific epithet or species. The genus name always begins with a capital letter, but the species name is always lower case. *Lactuca sativa* is the lettuce in your salad. Subspecies, variety and forma names are not required on botanical illustrations. If you want to use them on your work, you abbreviate the words (subsp., var., f.) in Roman followed by the name in italics. Example: *Lactuca sativa* var. *crispa* (leaf lettuce).

Hybrids are a cross between plants of two different species. For example, *Lilium* x *parkmanii* is the name given to the cross between *Lilium speciosum* and *Lilium auratum*. The 'x' indicates the hybrid status and must not be italicized.

A cultivar is a plant variety produced in cultivation by selective breeding. Cultivar names must be written in Roman (not italics) and must be placed in single quotation marks. (Examples: *Clematis* 'Huldine' or *Clematis* x *cartmanii* 'Joe') All the main words in a cultivar name are capitalized, but not prepositions. (*Lilium* 'Pot of Gold' or *Lilium* 'Musik der Nacht')

The names of cultivars are complicated by trade designations. Trade designations are usually written in SMALL CAPITALS and are not italicized. Trade designations must not be placed between quotes. When cited together, the order does not matter, but generally it is best to put the best-known name first.

Example of cultivar or Trade name: *Clematis* BLUE ANGEL 'Blekitny Aniol'

Resources for finding correct plant names include the USDA: [USDA Plants Database](#) or a university extension service. Susan recommended North Carolina State: [Extension | College of Agriculture and Life Sciences \(ncsu.edu\)](#) . Pennsylvania State Extension is: [Penn State Extension | The Pennsylvania State University \(psu.edu\)](#) Pennsylvania Master Gardeners work the Horticulture Hotline in each county and may be able to help answer your questions about plant identification.

Plants bought from garden centers or nurseries may be misnamed. Artists should try to ensure that the names that appear on their paintings are the correct names. Misnamed plants and/or incorrectly labelled artwork may adversely affect judging.

Remember, your Flower Show entries must be named properly. The images must be saved in this format: **Artistlastname.FirstInitial_Genus_species.jpg**. Please, reach out to Carol Ashton-Hergenhan if you need help for naming your flower show entries before you enter them on EntryThingy. Her email is carol.ashton@verizon.net

Resources:

The Society of Botanical Artists Limited Distance Learning Diploma Course 2005, revised 2015

Penn State Extension

USDA Plants Database