

THE MEANING OF BOTANICAL NAMES

Botanical names provide clues about the plant itself. Below is a list of words that are frequently used in the naming of plants. For a more comprehensive list or dictionary, see *Dictionary of Plant Names*, published by Timber Press.

Colors of Flowers or Foliage

Alba, albus – white	Arg, argenteus – silvery
Ater – black	Aurantiaca – orange
Aureus – golden	Aure, aurea, aureum – gold
Azurea, azureus – azure, sky blue	Caesius – blue gray
Caerula – deep blue	Candidus – pure white, shiny
Canus – ashy gray, hoary	Carneus – flesh colored
Citrinus – yellow	Coeruleus – dark blue
Coccineus – scarlet	Concolor – one color
Croceus – yellow	Cruentus – bloody
Discolor – two or separate colors	Flava, flavum – yellow
Glaucus – covered with gray bloom	Griseum – gray
Incanus – gray, hoary	Lutea, luteus – reddish yellow
Miniata – of a reddish color	Nigra – black
Purpurea, purpureus – purple	Rosea – rose-colored
Rubens, ruber – red, ruddy	Rubra, rubrum – red
Rufus – ruddy	Sanguinea – blood-red
Viridis - green	

Plant or Flower Scents

Arom – odor
Dulce – sweet
Fragrans – fragrant
Fragrantissima – very fragrant
Mosch – musk odor
Odorata – scented

Leaf Form

Acerifolius – maple like leaves	Abr – delicate leaved
Angustifolius – narrow leaves	Aquifolius – spiny leaves
Buxifolius – leaves like boxwood	Ilicifolius – holly like leaves
Lanceolata – lance-shaped	Laurifolius – laurel-like leaves
Longifolia – long-leaved	Macrophylla – large-leaved
Microphylla – small-leaved	Parvifolia – small leaves
Palmate, palmatum – hand-shaped leaves	Populifolius – poplar like leaves
Rotundifolia – round-leaved	Salicifolius – willow like leaves

Plant Peculiarities

Acaulis – stemless	Amabile, amabilis – beautiful
Blanda – pleasant	Communis – common
Contorta – contorted growth habit	Cordata – heart-shaped
Crispa – finely waved, curled	Florida, floridus – flowering
Gracilis – graceful	Grandiflora – large-flowered
Hybridus – hybrid	Incana – gray-haired
Lacteal – milky	Laevis – smooth
Maculata – spotted	Majus – larger
Maxima – largest	Millefolium – thousand-leaved
Minor, minus – smaller	Minim – very small
Minut, minutus – very small	Mollis – soft and /or hairy
Mon – one (one leaf, one flower)	Multiflora – many-flowered
Nitida, nitidum – shining	Officinalis – used as
Perenne, perennis – perennial	Pictum – painted
Pulchella – pretty	Punctata – spotted
Semperflorens – ever blooming	Sempervirens – evergreen
Spectabilis – spectacular	Spinosisissimus – spiniest
Spinosus – spiny	Superbum – superb
Tomentosa, tomentosum – hairy	Umbellata – having flowers in umbels
Variegata – variegated	Villosa, villosum – softly hairy
Vulgaris – common	

Plant Shape

Arborescents – tree like	Elata – tall
Elegans – elegant, slender, willowy	Recta, erecta – upright, erect
Fruticosa – shrub like	Grand, grandi – big
Humilis – low-growing	Nana – dwarf, miniature
Pendula – drooping, pendulous	Prostrate, prostratum, procumbens – prostrate
Pumilia – low-growing, dwarf	Repens, reptans – creeping
Scandens – climbing	

Origin of Species

Aethiopicum – Africa	Europa – from Europe
Alpin – alpine regions	Hortensis – of the garden
Andi – Andes	Insularis – of the island
Antill – West Indies	Japonica, japonicum – from Japan
Australis – southern	Littoralis – of the seashore
Barbadensis – native to Barbados	Maritime – from near the sea
Borealis – northern	Montana, montanus – from the mountains
Campestris – of the field or plains	Palustris – from marshes or wetlands
Canadensis – from Canada or America	Riparius – of riverbanks
Canariensis – from the Canary Islands	Rivalis, rivularis – of brooks
Capensis – from the Cape of Good Hope	Saxatilis – inhabiting rocks
Chilensis – from Chile	Virginiana – from Virginia
Chinensis – from China	