



## PLANT NAMES

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century flower shows began to offer prizes to those gardeners who were able to label their plants most accurately, and reading through the Caldwell ledgers, it is easy to see why this became necessary.

The early ledgers (2 and 6 were the first to be transcribed), date from the 1790s and the majority of plants were fruits and vegetables, with some forest trees and just a handful of ornamental plants. Most were recorded by their common name and this was generally followed in the transcription process, so the modern name given was Oak rather than *Quercus*, etc.

By the 1830s (see ledger 10) gardening was changing. Although the big landowners continued to order vast quantities of vegetables and fruit trees, the suburban gardener was more likely to require only ornamental plants and these have, for the most part, been recorded by their botanical names. Hence, you will find entries under both Oak and *Quercus*.

The entries in the ledgers are not always accurate. This, combined with handwriting that is not always easy to read, required a good deal of research. A common mistake was to use the wrong gender (e.g. *pontica* instead of *ponticum*; *albo* instead of *alba*). We have taken the approach of recording what was in the ledger, although there are some where we have used the correct gender, simply because the handwriting was sufficiently unclear to give the writer the benefit of the doubt.

We have been much helped in our transcription of difficult to read names by using the invaluable International Plant Name Index ([www.ipni.org/](http://www.ipni.org/)), with its "wild card" feature. This has certain drawbacks however, one being that the date on which the name was first used is not always shown, although some names are well-enough known to the layman to allow a degree of confidence.

Also useful is The Plant List ([www.theplantlist.org/](http://www.theplantlist.org/)) which provides information as to whether or not a plant name is accepted, a synonym or unresolved. However, this is not definitively helpful, as we do not know which authority was behind the names used in the ledger. One example is *Andromeda speciosa*, which is shown as either unresolved or a synonym of *Eubotrys racemosa*. *Helianthus multiflorus* is accepted (L.), a synonym for *H. annuus* (Hook.) or unresolved (W. Young).

It has therefore been difficult to know which modern name to give some plants and, it has to be admitted, we have not always been consistent in our approach. With some, generally where the

name is currently well known, we have used the ledger name as the modern name. Where the modern name is not so well known, we have tended to use the now-correct name.

However, we have not researched very deeply and it may well be that we have stopped short of finding the right answer. One entry is for *Salpiglossis integrifolia*. In 1833, this was apparently renamed both *Nierembergia phoenicea* (by Don) and *Petunia violacea* (by Lindley). In 1915 it was named *Petunia integrifolia*. A tossed coin means that you will find it under Petunia.

Some plants were recorded in the ledgers with names for which it was necessary to use educated guesses. See for example, *Escholomea rubra*, which can be found under Escallonia. If your expertise allows you to put us right, please contact us.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that where a common name has been used, it has not always been possible to be sure which plant it is. Bachelor's Buttons, for example, could refer to *Lychnis* (see index to Daniel Grimwood's Chelsea Nursery Catalogue of 1783); *Ranunculus aconitifolius* (Jane Loudon's The Ladies Flower Garden of Ornamental Perennials, 1843); *Centaurea cyanus* (Richard Buxton's Botanical Guide, 1849); *Gomphrena globosa* (G.M. Kern's Practical Landscape Gardening, Cincinnati, 1855). In 1805 Abercrombie found no need to explain further which plant he meant:

*"Many sorts of perennial and biennial plants may still be planted; such as the scarlet-lychnis, rose-campion, rocket, catchfly, campanula, bachelor's-buttons, and the like."*