The Names of Plants is a handy, two-part reference book for the botanist and amateur gardener. The book begins by documenting the historical problems associated with an ever-increasing number of common names of plants and the resolution of these problems through the introduction of International Codes for both botanical and horticultural nomenclature. It also outlines the rules to be followed when plant breeders name a new species or cultivar of plant.

The second part of the book comprises an alphabetical glossary of generic and specific plant names, and components of these, from which the reader may interpret the existing names of plants and construct new names.

For the third edition, the book has been updated to include explanations of the International Codes for both Botanical Nomenclature (2000) and Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (1995). The glossary has similarly been expanded to incorporate many more commemorative names.
THE NAMES OF PLANTS

THIRD EDITION

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Preface to the first edition

Originally entitled *The naming of plants and the meanings of plant names*, this book is in two parts. The first part has been written as an account of the way in which the naming of plants has changed with time and why the changes were necessary. It has not been the writer’s intention to dwell upon the more fascinating aspects of common names but rather to progress from these to the situation which exists today; in which the botanical and horticultural names of plants must conform to internationally agreed standards. The aim has been to produce an interesting text which is equally as acceptable to the amateur gardener as to the botanist. The temptation to make this a definitive guide to the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature was resisted since others have done this already and with great clarity. A brief comment on synonymous and illegitimate botanical names and a reference to recent attempts to accommodate the various traits and interests in the naming of cultivated plants was added after the first edition.

The book had its origins in a collection of Latin plant names, and their meanings in English, which continued to grow by the year but which could never be complete. Not all plant names have meaningful translations. Some of the botanical literature gives full citation of plant names (and translations of the names, as well as common names). There are, however, many horticultural and botanical publications in which plant names are used in a casual manner, or are misspelled, or are given meanings or common names that are neither translations nor common (in the world-wide sense). There is also a tendency that may be part of modern language, to reduce names of garden plants to an abbreviated form (e.g. Rhodo for *Rhododendron*). Literal names such as Vogel’s *Napoleona*, for *Napoleona vogelii*,...
provide only limited information about the plant. The dedication of the genus to Napoleon Bonaparte is not informative. Only by further search of the literature will the reader find that Theodor Vogel was the botanist to the 1841 Niger expedition and that he collected some 150 specimens during a rainy July fortnight in Liberia. One of those specimens, number 45, was a *Napoleona* that was later named for him as the type of the new species by Hooker and Planchon. To have given such information would have made the text very much larger.

The author has compiled a glossary which should serve to translate the more meaningful and descriptive names of plants from anywhere on earth but which will give little information about many of the people and places commemorated in plant names. Their entries do little more than identify the persons for whom the names were raised and their period in history. The author makes no claim that the glossary is all-encompassing or that the meanings he has listed are always the only meanings that have been put upon the various entries. Authors of Latin names have not always explained the meanings of the names they have erected and, consequently, such names may have been given different meanings by subsequent writers.
Since making the assumption, in the second edition, that genetic manipulation of the properties of plants might require new consideration of the ways in which they are to be named, GM has proceeded apace. Not only can the innate genetic material be re-ordered – in ways that nature would have rejected through their exposure to natural selection by the environment – but alien genetic material, from other organisms, can be introduced to give bizarre results. *Arabidopsis thaliana* has only 10 chromosomes and has been the plant of choice for cytologists and nucleic acid workers because of this. The twenty-first century sees its genetic code mapped and its 25,000 genes being examined individually to ascertain the ‘meaning of plant life’. From quite practical beginnings such as giving tomato fruits an extended keeping time, to esoteric developments such as building a luminescence gene from a jellyfish into a mouse, there is now a proposal to insert a gene from an electric eel into plants so that the plants can provide sources of electricity. This new ‘green revolution’ has an historical ring of familiarity about it!

The new century has not yet brought universal consistency in accepting the botanical and the horticultural codes. Yet science is already seeking to move towards an international biodiversity code for the naming of everything. If one was to be facetious, one might observe that man is still at 6’s and 7’s in seeking an explanation of everything – and may well, in the end, find that the answer is 42!

The study of whole organisms and their systematic relationships is an economically unrewarding pure science but an essential area of continuing investigation. If man is intent on producing genetically deviant life forms, the descent of these must be known and their names must reflect that descent.