

# Not one but two botanical names?



Carla  
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## AROUND THE YARD

It's bad enough that botanical names look like Latin but there's not just one name, but two, and sometimes three of them. All plants have at least two botanical names and it's the combination of the two that identifies the plant.

In a very rough analogy, 'the MTS Centre' identifies a specific place. 'MTS Centre, centre ice' identifies a specific place on the hockey rink at the MTS Centre. Many other events take place in the MTS Centre, and lots of buildings have a centre ice. It's the combination of the two pieces of information that fully identifies the exact place. Plant names are similar.

Don't be put off by their look. Use the letters as a guide, add lots of syllables, and aim to put an accent somewhere in the middle. Keep in mind, that just like the

plants themselves, there are lots of variations on the pronunciations.

The first is the genus name, which identifies a group of plants with similar characteristics.

In some instances, the genus name is in common use. Aster, Clematis, Cotoneaster, Hydrangea, Hosta, Iris, Spirea, Weigela are all examples.

Some genus names are fun sounding. Filipendula (fil-ih-PEND-yew-lah) is a perfect match for a tall perennial that produces fluffy, feathery flowers. Syringa (sih-RIN-gah) is a lovely dance sounding word, and a perfect accompaniment to the lilacs' joyful spring flowering.

And then there's the confusing one. Picea brings to mind the pines, but is in fact the spruces.

The second name identifies the species name, and often provides descriptive information such as the colour, texture, growing habit, country of origin.

Some of the more commonly used ones include: alba (white), alpinum (Alps growing conditions), floribunda (flowering abundantly), fulgida (brightly

coloured), horizontalis (spreading horizontally), nitida (shining), prostrata (prostrate), purpurea (purple), reptans (creeping), rubra (red), spectabilis (spectacular), spicata (spike), tomentosum (woolly), vulgaris (common).

If you're looking for the tried and true, reliable, suckering lilac, *Syringa vulgaris* is the one.

*Veronica spicata* is an upright spike, while *Veronica prostrata* a low mound shape.

The big bold splashy *Iris germanica* prefers average moisture, and is in its element in the centre of the flowerbed. The lovely, more subdued, *Iris sibirica*, prefers moist soil, and is natural along any water feature.

Don't shy away from botanical names. Certainly they have lots of letters, but also lots of information, and come mid-winter, offer a bit of summer fun.

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**Iris Germanica is but one example of the two botanical names for all plants.**

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