

## From the Ground Up April 2010

By: Leann Barron

### *Dirty Words 101*

Come on, just one time. Say it. We won't tell anybody. Go ahead, say: "botanic nomenclature." Practice phonetically with me now: bo-TAN'-ic NO'-men-CLAY-ture. And no, it's not some new-fangled yard art. Simply put, it's the scientific naming of plants. It has a very long history, starting with the ancient Greeks, and in 1753, a Swedish botanist named Linnaeus took on the daunting task of giving plant species the Latin names that eventually became the standard, universal language for botanists, horticulturists, the plant industry. It is used throughout the world, no matter what your mother tongue. It's a very good thing.

Now I know that many of us are uncomfortable using "big" words, especially those that sound pompous, like you are a dreaded "*know-it-all*." And once you use one or two of those "big" scientific words, people will expect you to say more of them, and to know everything there is to know about plants, and then they find out you actually DON'T know everything, and they roll their eyes behind your back--that's what you're thinking, isn't it? But fear not. If you enjoy gardening, even just casually, learning some horticultural language is fun and interesting. You will also find it useful when working crossword puzzles, you won't be duped into buying the wrong plant by your local nursery salespeople, and you can dazzle your friends at church, cocktail parties, soccer games and grocery store lines. But don't take the attitude of the kid who flunked botany: "Latin killed the Romans, and now it's killing me!" Have fun, relax, and learn something new this month. You can finally even practice out loud in the privacy of your garden.

Here is a bit of basic nomenclature and terminology associated with rose gardening :

**Rosaceae:** (rose-A'-see-aye) This is the big *Family* of about 3,000 plant species. Roses are the kissing cousins of strawberries, apples, raspberries, cherries, quince, laurels, crabapples, hawthorns, spiraea, cotoneaster and other favorite plants, also in the Rosaceae family.

Note: This can be a good selling point when talking with people about growing roses, just tell them if they can grow any of these plants, then roses are a snap!

**Species:** you know how to pronounce this one. When used in rose descriptions, species refers to roses that existed before all other rose classes, often called “wild roses.” They existed long before man with some rose fossils dating back 33 million years. They are usually single-petaled blooms on plants that range from 18 inches to over 20 feet. Most species roses are listed by their Latin (botanic) name, beginning with “Rosa.”

Breaking down rose classes requires scientific clarification. For example, you take a cutting of Granny’s old rose and it’s identified as ‘Rose de Rescht’ (pronounced duh Reshht). It would be classified as a Damask (also called Portland) rose, believed to be a genetic cross between the **species** (there’s that word again!) roses, *Rosa phoenica* and *Rosa gallica*. There is still a good deal of scholarly disagreement, with others arguing the Damask is a cross between *Rosa gallica* and *Rosa moschata* (musk rose). And this is just one rose--gives new meaning to the term “double-crossing!” The enormous work done by Linnaeus in the 1750s still remains the only extant working classification system at present that enjoys universal scientific acceptance.

**Cultivar:** a variety of a rose that has been deliberately selected for specific desirable characteristics (such as fragrance, disease resistance, color, form of the flower, etc.).

**Bud union:** the swollen junction on a the main trunk of a grafted rose plant, located at or near soil level.

**Basal break:** a strong new cane growing from the bud union. This is a good thing. We want this.

**Remontant:** a rose that repeat blooms, or blooms continuously. ‘Knock Out’ is an example of a remontant rose.

**Dr. Huey (both rootstock and rose):** This is literally the most common rose grown in the USA. And not on purpose. It is used as a vigorous root stock for grafting buds from other hybrids onto. It propagates easily, it has a long budding season, the plants harden off and ship well, they store well

when bare-rooted, and the general adaptability to the broad area of climates and soils that we ship to is pretty good.

**Own-root rose:** rose grown by rooting a cutting from a stock plant. Many rose gardeners prefer this rose plant for health, hardiness and fewer suckers.

**Sucker:** An unwanted growth that comes from below the bud union on a grafted rose. Suckers usually have leaves of a different color and shape than that of the cultivar and don't produce blooms. It is important to rip off the sucker directly from the rootstock; simply cutting it off will stimulate it to regrow. We don't want suckers. They are not lollipops.

At the very least, I hope this month's column stimulates your brain's language center, the left temporal lobe. Hurry Spring!