

GARDENING NOTES

(By MR. J. JOYCE, Landscape Gardener, Christchurch.)

SCIENTIFIC AND COMMON NAMES OF PLANTS.

A great many people wonder why plants have such strange botanical names, and cannot understand why they are not given simpler ones, which would be more easily remembered. Well, there is some sense in this contention from the amateur's point of view. Every botanist, no matter to what country he belongs, uses the same language to designate the various plants and the species to which they belong, and this practice simplifies matters, and facilitates the interchange of ideas among scientists of various countries. It would never do if an independent system of botany was followed in every country. Then every plant would have a name according to the choice and fancy of the different botanists, which would result in general confusion. Under the scientific system of botany every plant is known by the same name in every civilised country, so that the nurseryman or seedsman can forward his order to Spain, France, Italy, or Russia, and he will have it filled as accurately as if he had sent it to the most trustworthy firm in England. That is one advantage of plants having scientific names. They are known by these to every professional gardener all over the world. If an English gardener goes to a foreign country he is at home with the plants which he sees there, and the same is the case with any foreign gardener who comes to an English-speaking country. Putting all those things together, we must come to the conclusion that it is fit and proper that plants should bear the same scientific name in every part of the world. Of course that does not prevent plants being given local names. For instance, that favorite spring flower, the primrose, is well known by every English-speaking person, but it is not known by that name in any other country. So that if you sent to China, or Japan, or elsewhere for a primrose, they might send you an oak tree or something else. Of course, if they understood English and knew the plant, matters would be all right, but all business people are not linguists. On the other hand, if you were to send for a primula to any of those countries, you would in due course receive a primrose. No doubt, it is known to each country under its local name. So, too, in every country the flowers are called by the common names which the people have given them, but amongst professionals they are known by their botanical names. Perhaps, not one in a hundred of the rural population is acquainted with the botanical names of the most common flowers. It is, however, very necessary for gardeners, nurserymen, and seedsmen, that they should be conversant with both the scientific and local names of plants. And having given reasons how necessary it is that there should be a universal system of nomenclature for plants, I will give a few examples

of these scientific terms, and their equivalents in the English language.

As I have been making use of the primula for an example, I cannot do better than to commence with it. The Latin word *primus* means the first, and as the primrose is one of the first plants to bloom in the spring, it is easy to understand how it got its name. Another common plant we meet with every day is the New Zealand flax. This is called phormium, from the Latin word *phormos* (a basket), as it was used by the Natives for making baskets. Another very common little flower is the forget-me-not, called by botanists *myosotis*, from *mus*, a mouse, and *otis*, an ear. It is said to have got this name from the resemblance of its leaves to the ear of a mouse. The literal translation of the Latin name is mouse ear. *Passiflora* is the name of the passion flower, from the Latin *passio* (suffering), and *flor* (flower). The name given to the geranium is *pelargonium*, from *pelargos* (a stork), as the ripe seed resembles a stork's bill. The Japanese evergreen tree, *retinospora plumosa*, has got its name from the seed being resinous—*retine* (resin) and *sporos* (seed), whilst the word *plumosa* means plume-like. So that the name of this tree in English would be the resin-seed plume-tree. One of our fir trees is called *picea Nordmanniana*, which in plain English means Nordman's pitch tree. The blue gum tree is called *eucalyptus*, from *eue* (good), and *kalyppto* (covering), referring to the calyx having a covering or cap which falls off when the flower expands. The common cabbage tree is named *dracana*, from *drakina*, a female dragon, for if the tree is wounded the juice emitted becomes a hard, dry gum, having the same properties as the resinous substance known as dragon's blood. The *toi toi* is called *arundo conspicua*, the word *arundo* being the Latin for reed.

I think what I have said and the examples I have given will show how important and necessary it is that there should be a recognised and universal system of naming plants—a system which facilitates commercial transactions between various countries, and helps to promote the exchange of ideas between botanists all over the world.

SYMPATHY.

If there is one person who deserves sympathy it is surely he who suffers from chronic colds. A sudden change in the weather or going out into the night air from a heated room, is quite enough to bring on the trouble. Usually the tendency to catch cold is due to a generally run-down condition, and the treatment should take the form of a tonic like BAXTER'S LUNG PRESERVER. It is pleasant to take, gives sure results, and is quite harmless; for children and adults you cannot find a better cough or cold remedy. 1/10 a bottle from all chemists and stores, or by post direct.

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