

Categories of Plant Name in use at the WA Herbarium

This primer aims to explain the various categories of plant name used at the WA Herbarium and throughout FloraBase. The content has been adapted from Chapman (2000).

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Scientific names

A scientific name for each plant taxon consists of the genus and species name, and sometimes also the lowest ranked infraspecific name (ie. subspecies, variety or forma). It is usual to provide the author(s) after the scientific name, often in abbreviated form, to indicate who published the name as well as to verify its validity. An authors name in brackets indicates an earlier combination under a different genus or species (respectively) and is followed by the name of the author who has assigned the taxon to its current placement. Brummitt and Powell (1992) is the standard followed for citing authors of plant names.

Hybrid taxa are indicated by the use of the symbol '×', either preceding the name in the case of formally named hybrids, or conjoining the epithets of the two parent taxa.

FloraBase, following the Census of Western Australian Plants database, catalogues taxa with as yet unpublished names. These are names that have been proposed or otherwise assigned and may be in use to some extent within the botanical community but are yet to be written up and formally published according to the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN, Greuter *et al.*, 2000). Note that it is not the intention of the WA Herbarium to publish new taxa or new combinations within FloraBase. As specified in the ICBN, names can still only be effectively and validly published in printed form and by meeting specific criteria.

Systems in place at the Western Australian Herbarium track these names and upon publication of the scientific names, unpublished names are treated as informal synonyms. They fall into two distinct categories, which generally reflect different stages along the path to publication of a scientific plant name.

Phrase names

The term 'phrase name' has traditionally been used to refer to the names given to species prior to the Linnaean system of binomial classification first proposed in 1753. In 1992 the term phrase name was given an updated definition at an early meeting of the Australian Herbarium Information Systems Committee (HISCOM) when a formula was adopted to assist institutions to assign a reliable 'handle' for putative new species yet to be formally described by taxonomic specialists.

The species phrase name contains four components — the generic name, a rank indicator, a geographic or morphological identifier and a collector's name and number representing a herbarium specimen vouchering the concept of the new species.

This last component is especially important as it ties the phrase name to a physical representative of the species which is useful when (as is commonly the case in preliminary stages) no other documentation about the new taxon is available. In this respect it has some similarity in purpose to the type concept used in the formal taxonomic naming process. However, it is important to note that there is no actual or inferred connection between the specimen used to vouch a phrase name and any subsequent assignment of type status if the taxon is ultimately formally recognised.

Table 1. Example phrase name formulas and examples.

	Formula	Example
For species	<i>Genus</i> sp. identifier (collector's name and number)	<i>Pterostylis</i> sp. crinkled leaf (G.J. Keighery 13426)
For infraspecies	<i>Genus species</i> author rank identifier (collectors name and number)	<i>Acacia mutabilis</i> Maslin subsp. Young River (G.F. Craig 2052)

Manuscript names

During the formal process of researching, describing and publishing a name for a new species, which can often take a number of years, a manuscript name may be proposed, usually by the researcher studying the species. This is a name under which information is accumulated during preparation of the manuscript document.

While a manuscript name is commonly the same as the formal name under which a taxon is eventually published, it is still a working hypothesis until that time and can be subsumed into an existing taxon or given another name if desired by the author. A manuscript name is usually in a Latinised form in line with publication requirements. To avoid the possibility that a manuscript name is mistaken for a published one we append an 'ms' after the name to indicate its informal status.

Common names

Non-scientific names for common taxa were initially sourced from Eleanor Bennett's publication *Common and Aboriginal Names of Western Australian Plant Species* (Bennett, 1993). Subsequently a selection of common names by Roger Fryer (Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority) was used when more than one was available in Bennett's list, on the basis that adopting the same common names set was useful.

However, little work has been done on common names for Western Australian plants with respect to the many significant taxonomic changes since Bennett's book was produced. FloraBase therefore is not intended to be an authoritative listing of common names and they are given here simply as a general guide for those who find them useful. For a brief commentary on the utility of common names see Kanis, Crisp and Orchard (1999, pp. 128–9).

Synonyms and other non-current names

Superseded plant names are tracked by the databases underlying FloraBase, and their continued presence is intended to help readers familiarise themselves with the latest taxonomic concepts so that known plant names no longer accepted can be looked up and the currently accepted name and placement found.

These non-current names are categorised here in a manner similar to Green (1985). Taxonomic and nomenclatural synonyms have arisen due to the taxonomic changes resulting from systematic research. In addition, some plant names previously used in publications on the State's flora have now been found to have been misapplied against different WA species, while others have been found not to occur within the State at all and have been excluded.

- **Taxonomic synonym** — a species name now considered to apply to a taxon with a prior

established name. In general the earliest applicable name has priority.

- **Nomenclatural synonym** — most commonly, a species name transferred to another genus and with a new combination of genus and species epithet referring to the taxon.
- **Misapplied name** — a name used in the botanical literature but now considered to refer to one or more different WA taxa.
- **Excluded name** — a name used in the botanical literature that actually refers to one or more different taxa never occurring in WA.

References

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- [Mapping Primer](#)
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