

Understanding Your Plant Tag

SAOS Beginners Culture Class - 2019 08 August

Orchid Naming Nomenclature (from <http://firstrays.com/free-information/nomenclature/>)

All plants and animals may be classified using the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. Without going through the entire structure, we can say that all orchids belong to the Family Orchidaceae, and are grouped below that into various subfamilies, tribes, subtribes, and so on. It is the next level down – the genus – upon which we concentrate. The following sections delineate the proper way plants' names should be documented, and will help you understand exactly what that tag says:

Species

Cattleya intermedia var. *coerulea* subvar. *aquinii* 'Big Blush'

Cattleya – genus

- Latin
- Italicized
- Capitalized

intermedia – species

- Latin
- Italicized
- Lower case

coerulea – variety

- Latin
- Italicized
- "var" not italicized

- Lower case

aquinii – subvariety

- Latin
- Italicized
- "subvar" not italicized
- Lower case

'Big Blush' – cultivar (sometimes called "clone")

- Enclosed in single quotes
- Not Latinized
- Capitalized
- Not italicized

Artificial Hybrids

Phalaenopsis Sweetie Bear 'Sara Jane'

Phalaenopsis – genus or hybrid genus*

- Latin
- Italicized
- Capitalized

Sweetie Bear – Grex (hybrid name)

- Not Latin
- Not italicized
- Upper case

'Sara Jane' – cultivar

- Enclosed in single quotes
- Not Latinized
- Capitalized
- Not italicized

* While in this hybrid example, *phalaenopsis* was the genus of both parents, hybrid-generic names are used when more than one genus is involved in the breeding. Often, in combinations of two or three genera, the names are combined, such as *doritaenopsis* (a cross between *doritis* and *phalaenopsis*) or

Understanding Your Plant Tag

SAOS Beginners Culture Class - 2019 08 August

sophrolaeliocattleya (sophronitis, laelia and cattleya). When the hybrids get more complex, it is common to name the multigeneric hybrid after an individual, attaching an “-ara” to the end, as in potinara (cattleya, brassavola, laelia, and sophronitis).

Unnamed Hybrids

If a cross has been made, but has not been raised to blooming and registered with the International Orchid Registrar, it is common to simply list the parents.

Pescatorea lehmanii X *Cochleanthes* River’s Edge

The female parent (also known as the capsule- or “pod” parent) is listed first. Additionally, if the cross involves plants of the same genus, it can be listed once, simplifying the name, as in *Paphiopedilum bellatulum* X *delenatii*. Sometimes those are enclosed in brackets – *Paphiopedilum (bellatulum X delenatii)*. Note that if this hybrid does get registered and named, both it and the reciprocal cross *Cochleanthes* River’s Edge x *Pescatorea lehmanii* will have the same grex name.

Natural Hybrids

These are naturally occurring hybrids from locations where populations of similar plants overlap. They can be either interspecific, within one genus, or intergeneric, between species of different genera. The “X” that designates the plant as a natural cross, is often left off.

Interspecific: *Paphiopedilum* X *wellesleyanum* (*Paph. concolor* x *godefroyae*)

Paphiopedilum – genus

- Latin
- Italicized
- Capitalized

X *wellesleyanum* – grex

- Latin
- Italicized
- Lower case

Intergeneric: X *Dactyloglossum mixtum* (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii* x *Coeloglossum viride*)

X *Dactyloglossum* – Hybrid genus

- Latin
- Italicized
- Capitalized

mixtum – hybrid

- Latin
- Italicized
- Lower case

Note that very often the “X” is left out of the name of natural hybrids, which is supposed to be reserved for the man-made equivalents.

Additional Links:

[Understanding Your Plant Label](https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-monthly-tips.htm), Courtney Hackney - <https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-monthly-tips.htm>

[Understanding Your Plant Tag](https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-basic-basics.htm), Sue Bottom – <https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-basic-basics.htm>

[Orchid Genera Abbreviations](https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-basic-genus.htm), RHS - <https://staugorchidsociety.org/culture-basic-genus.htm>