

Snapdragon

Antirrhinum

WHAT'S IN A NAME ?

Weasel snout

Dogmouth



Plants are very
important to us.

We eat a lot of
them - like these
tomatoes ...

...or these cucumbers.





Green plants are at the beginning of nearly every food chain so even the food we get from animals depends on plants.



How many uses of plants can you see in this picture?

Look at the next slide when you have had a go at making a list.

Here are some of the things you should be able to find:

- Wooden window frames and doors
- Paper advertisements
- Flowers to give pleasure
- Flour in cakes and bread
- Fruit and vegetables
- Rubber tyres on car and bicycle
- Willow basket on bicycle
- Street sign points to coffee and tea

You will find more pictures like this one on the SAPS website

Why should we try to group and name plants?

Imagine what it would be like doing shopping if supermarkets didn't group similar things together and they didn't have names!



- We can sort objects into groups according to their similarities and differences.
- This helps us to remember what they are like and often makes it easier to find them.



If you want to know where the carrots are you can use the name. You won't have to describe them!

Naming plants makes it easier to talk to people about them.



For example, this blackberry plant has shiny black fruits that are good to eat.

The black fruits
of the ivy,
however, are very
poisonous. It is
easier to explain
this if the plants
have names.

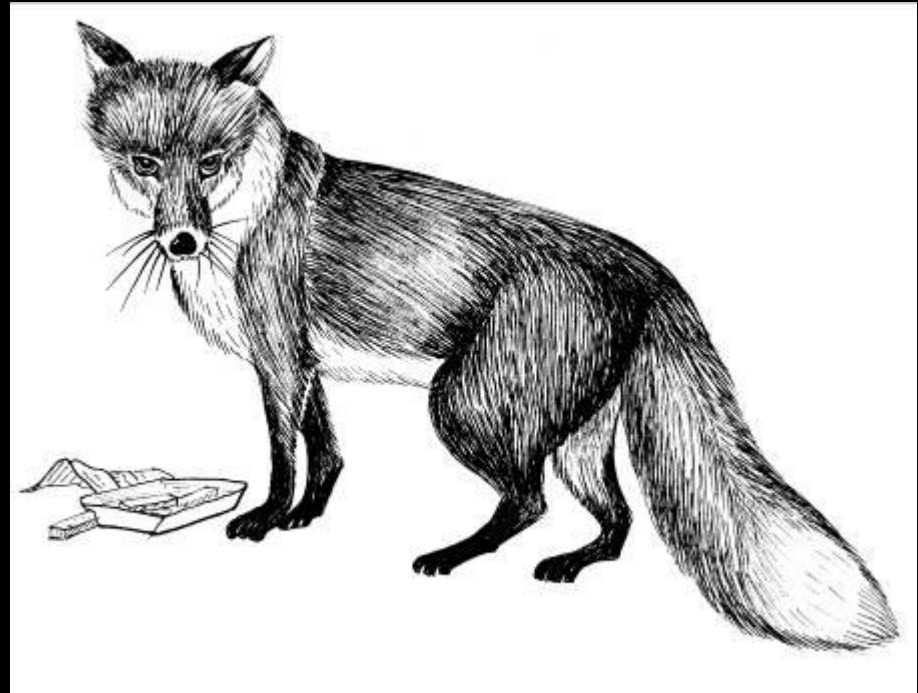


Most of the plants in England have English names, some of which date back hundreds of years.

How were these names chosen? For example, why is this plant called the Foxglove?



Some names like 'foxglove' come from ancient legends or folk tales.



Bad fairies are said to have given the Foxglove plant to the fox so that he could put the flowers on his toes and creep up to the chicken roosts in silence!



Some names describe what the plant looks like. This plant is sometimes called Old Man's Beard because of its grey hairy fruits.

Stinging nettles



A needle-like
stinging hair

The Common Nettle (one of the stinging nettles) possibly got its name from an old English word 'netel' meaning needle, referring to the stinging hairs.



If you turn the fruits of the Bird's-foot-trefoil upside down you have a bird's foot!



Other plant names came from how the plant was used.

Teasel got its name because the dried heads were used to comb (tease out) a texture onto cloth.



Dyer's
Greenweed was
used to make a
yellow dye.

This could be
mixed with the
blue dye from
the Woad plant
to make a green
colour.



Many were
valuable
medicinal plants.

Stitchwort was
used for curing
stomach cramps
or 'stitch'.



Tormental was used for curing little 'torments' like toothache and headaches.



In the Middle Ages many people believed God had given plants signs showing what they should be used for.

The yellow spots and purple stripes of the Eyebright flower looked like a diseased bloodshot eye and so the plant was used to treat eye complaints.

These local names are fun and often interesting but they can cause confusion.



The names change from country to country.

The English Daisy is known as the 'Little Easter Flower' in France.

The French call the English Cowslip the Cuckoo.





Names even change from one part of a country to another.

← This Snapdragon is known as a Dogmouth in Somerset.

The problem: a language was needed that could be understood in different parts of the world .



The answer: since the Middle Ages all educated men read and wrote in Latin and so this became the language used by scientists.

There was no system for choosing plant names and the Latin names could be very long-winded.



*Solanum caule inermi
herbaceo, foliis pinnatis
integerrimis*

This was an
early Latin
name for the
potato plant !



Linnaeus (born in 1707) was remarkable scientist. He surveyed over 12 000 species of animals and plants and suggested ways of grouping them.

As part of his studies he went on many expeditions. Here he is dressed for his Lapland expedition.



His way of grouping living organisms has changed a great deal.

One of his animal groups, the paradoxica contained the unicorn, dragons and the phoenix as well as a giant tadpole!

Today we know that only tadpole actually exists. It belongs to a frog which is about 6-7 cm long. The tadpole can grow up to 25 cm long.



His naming system however is still in use today.

Linnaeus gave each organism just two Latin names. This made life much easier.



➤ the **genus** a name which belongs to a group of plants

➤ the **species** name which separates the different plants in the genus.



The potato

Genus name → Solanum tuberosum ← Species name

Like the English names Latin names were chosen for various reasons.



Some plants were named in honour of people. Linnaeus named this plant, which he described as a noble plant - *Rudbeckia* after one of his professors, Rudbeck.

Another plant he
described as 'an
ugly little weed'
was named after
Professor
Siegesbeck !

Guess which
Professor
criticised his
work!

siegesbeckia orientalis

© 2004 pictured by antonie van den bos
for aycronto.com





The creeping buttercup has a Latin name which describes where it grows and what it looks like.

Ranunculus repens

Rana from Frog
suggesting wet
places

repens meaning
creeping

As we learn more about plants their names may be changed so that they fit better into the present day groups.



A committee of botanists from around the world lays down the rules and guidelines for doing this.

This plant was first called *Geranium peltatum* by Linnaeus in 1753. It is now called *Pelargonium peltatum*.

Try making up an English name and a Latin-sounding name for this plant. When the seeds in the pods are dry and ripe they rattle.



With the exception of slides 26, 27 and 30, all images and drawings are by John and Anne Bebbington. Sources of slides 26, 27 and 30 are identified on the respective pages.

Images used in this PowerPoint presentation are protected by copyright. Science and Plants for Schools and the Field Studies Council are grateful for permission to include this copyright material. Terms for the conditions of use are given on this website and in the booklet (Grouping and classification). Requests for further use of this material should be addressed to:

*Science and Plants for Schools,
Cambridge University Botanic Garden,
1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE, UK
(email: saps@botanic.cam.ac.uk)*