

# The Name Game

by Guy Sternberg  
Starhill Forest Arboretum  
NAPPC Oak Reference Collection  
Petersburg, Illinois USA

In this issue of *International Oaks* we attempt to relieve, or at least explain, some of the confusion surrounding oak nomenclature. The following brief guideline is intended primarily for authors and reviewers working with papers for publication in *International Oaks*. It also may be very helpful for the majority of readers, who probably are not specialists in taxonomy and not completely familiar with current nomenclature of the genus *Quercus*. Beginning in the broadest sense, and continuing through levels of increasingly fine detail, oaks may be described as follows:

**Family** = Fagaceae (Pronounced “fah-GAY-see-ee” or “fay-Gay-see”.)

This family includes oaks and their closest relatives, such as beeches (*Fagus*), chestnuts (*Castanea*), chinkapins (*Castanopsis*), lithocarps (*Lithocarpus*, including *Pasania*), tanoaks (*Chrysolepis*), and some obscure genera (*Trigonobalanus*, *Colombobalanus*, *Formanodendron*). Another genus, the southern beeches (*Nothofagus*), sometimes is included, but sometimes placed in its own family, the Nothofagaceae.

**Genus** = Oak (In English) = *Quercus* (In Latin: written in italic and capitalized.)

**Subgenera** are:

- Scale-cup oaks = Subgenus *Quercus*

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- Ring-cup oaks = Subgenus *Cyclobalanopsis*

(Note that some authorities dispute the recognition of only two subgenera, separating the red oaks from Subgenus *Quercus* and giving them subgeneric rank as Subgenus *Erythrobalanus*; others still consider *Cyclobalanopsis* a distinct genus, like *Lithocarpus*.)

**Sections** within the scale-cup oaks are:

- White oaks = Section *Quercus* (Note: also called *Lepidobalanus*, *Leucobalanus*, *Euquercus*)
- Red oaks = Section *Lobatae* (Note: also called *Erythrobalanus*, *Rubrae*)
- Golden oaks = Section *Protobalanus* (Sometimes called "Intermediate Oaks")

(Sections can be further divided into Series, such as Series *Virentes*, the eastern live oaks of North and Central America.)

**Subspecies** are recognized within many species (e.g. *Quercus petraea* subsp. *huguetiana*.)

**Vernacular (common) Name** of a species = white oak.

**Botanical (Latin) Name** of the same species = *Quercus alba* (The genus is capi-

talized, and the entire name down through species level is written in italics.)

**Several Botanical Names** in the same genus written in a single paper = *Quercus alba*, *Q. velutina*, *Q. rubra* (After naming the genus, subsequent usage may be abbreviated *Q.*)

**Variety Name** = *Quercus alba* var. *pinnatifida* (The abbreviation "var." stands for variety, and is neither capitalized nor italicized. A variety is a sub-classification within a species.)

**Cultivar Name** = *Quercus frainetto* 'Schmidt' (formerly *Q. frainetto* cv. Schmidt) (A cultivar is literally a "cultivated variety"; published cultivar names are capitalized as proper nouns and enclosed by single quotes.)

**Registered Trademark Name** for the same oak = Forest Green® Oak. A trademark name is used in the United States to protect the marketing rights for a cultivar, because plant patents eventually expire but trademarks in continuous use do not. (The trademark is not the official name of the cultivar, but is used in the nursery trade. The full citation would include the cultivar name followed by

the trademark name.)

**Author Attributions:**

- Species with attribution = *Quercus alba* L. (“L.” is short for Linnaeus, who first named and described this species.)
- Variety with attribution = *Quercus shumardii* Buckl. var. *acerifolia* Palmer (Buckley first named and described the species, and Palmer defined the variety.)
- Corrected name = *Quercus shangxiensis* Z.K.Zhou nom. nov. *Q. lanceolata* S.Z.Qu et W.H.Zhang. non *Q. lanceolata* Bonpl. (Note that the plant names are shown in italics, but not the authors’ names; authors’ names which include initials are written without internal spaces. In this example, Dr. Zhekun Zhou corrected the name of a Chinese oak found in Shangxi. The name *Q. lanceolata* is a later homonym because it was assigned by S.Z. Qu and W.H. Zhang to this oak but had been applied earlier, *i.e.* with priority, to a Mexican oak species; the new, valid name for the Chinese species is *Q. shangxiensis*.)

**Hybrid Epithets:**

*Epithet* for a named hybrid oak = *Quercus* x*macdanielii* (Written as: *Genus* [space] cross sign [no space] *hy-*

*brid epithet*, and spoken “*Quercus macdanielii*” or sometimes, for clarity, “*Quercus* cross *macdanielii*”).

*Formula name* for the same cross = *Quercus robur* x *Q. macrocarpa* (Note spaces surrounding the cross sign on both sides in a formula name. In this example, *Q. robur* is placed first because it is the known pistillate parent for the type; when the parents’ respective genders are unknown, the parent species usually are placed in alphabetical order.)

**Vernacular (common) Name** for the same cross = English oak x bur oak (Also: McDaniel oak.)

Hopefully, this simplified summary of some of the confusing format conventions we use to describe oaks will make *International Oaks* more user friendly for all members. If you plan to submit a paper, or if understanding some of our most technical papers sometimes is difficult, please copy this guide and keep it handy for future reference.