NATURESCENE'S FLORA of the CÉVENNES

www.naturescene.co.uk/flowers

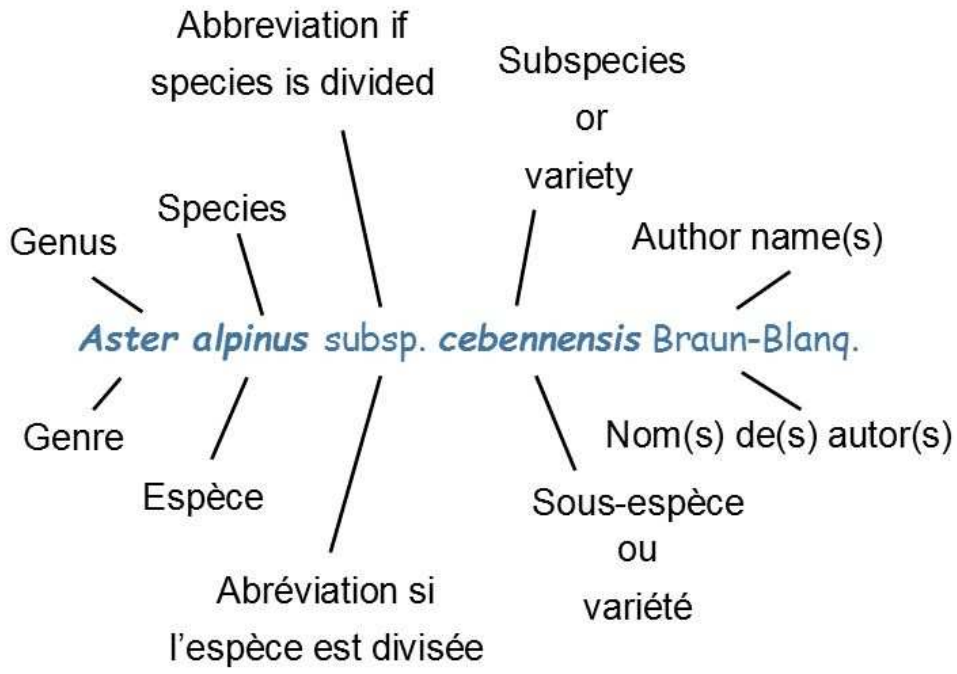
PLANT NAMES (Taxonomy)

and the FLORAS available

On this page:

LATIN PLANT NAMES -what do they mean?

The recognised international authority for naming plants is the International Plant Names Index (IPNI), and all plant names in Naturescene follow the database and its rules. In this Latin format, the plant can be recognised throughout the world.



LATIN NAME: Every known type of plant and animal on earth is awarded a unique name. As botanists of earlier centuries met with others across the globe, they used a form of Latin so that all nationalities could communicate freely. This convention still works well today.

GENUS: This is the name given to group of plants that share key similarities. They all come from the same genetic stock. As science progresses, genetic studies indicate that one or more members of a genus is not actually related, and they are placed in a different genus, hence are given a new name. The generic name is always written in italics, and begins with a capital letter.

SPECIES: This is the name given to plants within a particular genus that are so similar that they are potentially capable of inter-breeding (this rule is not absolute). To the casual observer, they will all look alike.
The species name is also written in italics, but does not begin with a capital letter.

SUBSPECIES: Usually because of geographical isolation, a group of plants within a species may develop one or more differences that allow them to be called a subspecies. Even if geographical isolation is broken down, this difference may make it difficult for the subspecies to interbreed with other members of the same species (for example, a different flowering season).
The subspecies name once again is written in italics, without a capital letter. The abbreviation that precedes it (always as "subsp.") is, however, not placed in italics.

VARIETY: This is similar to a subspecies, but the characteristics are less marked. As it is a matter of degree, botanists have not always agreed as to whether a group of plants are a subspecies or a variety.
The same naming rule is followed as for subspecies. It is written in italics, without a capital letter. The abbreviation that precedes it (always as "var.") is not placed in italics.

AUTHOR NAME(S): This is an internationally agreed abbreviation of the name of the person who first discovered and described the species. Later discoveries of subspecies or reclassification lead to the addition of other names, with the original author remaining in brackets, an excellent way of achieving posterity.
This information is not placed in italics. It is often omitted for brevity, but is essential for academic purposes, as when added to the Latin name, it becomes a unique identifier of a plant.

Numéro INPN: This is a unique number awarded by the French Inventaire Nationale du Patrimoine National to all plants and animals in France. The currently accepted name (in the format given above) as well as former synonyms are kept in INPN's downloadable database called TAXREF available to the public. Work is always ongoing in deciding the current valid name, after scientific investigation, but the reference number will always remain the same.
Every effort is made to validate the name used by Naturescene with that of the INPN by linking it to these unique numbers.

Why are there so many different Latin names for the same plant?

You will note that Naturescene sometimes gives one plant several different Latin names. Aren't they supposed to be unique?

Although the intention is that every Latin name is unique to one particular plant (or animal), this is not always easy. For example:

Names change over time because:-

- It has often happened that different botanists have unknowingly described the same plant, and awarded it the same species name. Later research has confirmed that this is the same plant, and only the original author's full name is retained.

- At some stage, certain groups of one species may be considered sufficiently different to be given a subspecies or variant status. The subspecies and the new author's name are added to the original Latin (which will include the abbreviated author's name)
- It is fairly common that a plant that what was believed to be a subspecies of one species, is in fact a subspecies of another species. The subspecies name is transferred to the new species name, and the abbreviated author's name added. On investigation, especially with current studies of genetic make-up, a species is placed in a different genus. The species name is retained (unless it already exists in that genus), and the new genus name is placed in front.

Names differ for the same plant in different flora today because:-

- The name changes just before publication of the flora. Naturescene uses the names of Tela Botanica, which are being constantly updated on-line, in accordance with the latest research.
- The authors of a flora have a different opinion to other authors of the correct placement of a plant. In the recent floras, their reasons for their choice are often set out in some detail.
- The Latin names of very plant on Naturescene's site give not only Tela Botanica's chosen name, but that of all the other key floras.

By selecting the 'Synonyms' tab at the top right, clicking of any synonym (9 times the number of agreed current names) will display the plant with its current name.

So with the key flora detailed below, we find the following amount of matching Latin names:-

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From the list of about 2200 plants known in the Cévennes National Park, the key flora described further on have:-

- 54% (1087 of 1996) of Latin names in common with Flore de la France; Coste 1937
- 84% (1449 of 1707) of Latin names in common with Flore des Causses; Barnard 2008
- 87% (1872 of 2148) of Latin names in common with Flore de la France méditerranéene continentale; Tison, Jauzein & Michaud 2014
- 96% (2074 of 2151) of Latin names in common with Flora Gallica; Tison & de Foucault 2014
- 93% (429 of 460) of Latin names in common with Flore du Parc National des Cévennes, Ed. Rouergue 2014 (of those described in detail)
- 100% of 2158 Latin names in common with Flora Botanica Jan 2015 and TAXREF v.7

Why use Latin names?
Why different names for the same plant?
What flower guides for the Cévennes?

FLORAS recommended by NATURESCENE

As can be seen from the map of the area covered (link top left of Naturescene's Flowers Home Page), the Cévennes is a complex area, straddling several climates, soil types and elevations, and has many plants unique to our area. It is, therefore, not easy to select one or two plant books to satisfy your needs. The year 2014 was very important for botanists in the Cévennes, and saw the publication of two key floras covering **every** plant of the region, and the Parc national des Cévennes published both a revised photo-illustrated guide to the principal plants of the region, and a revised guide the the Parc by habitat.
In addition to this, other books are of key use in identifying the plants to be found in the Cévennes.

Comprehensive floras, with keys to identification (all in French).

Flore de la France méditerranéene continentale, Tison, Jauzein & Michaud Ed. Naturalia Publications 2014 Highly technical and academic, the first flora to cover in great detail, with much discussion, the plants of our region, together with Mediterranean plants. Many line drawings to help with critical points of identification. Plants identified by a key, but no complete description of each plant. Too large for the field. Few photos; not for the beginner.
Flora Gallica, Tison & de Foucault, Ed. Biotope Editions 2014 Again, highly technical and academic, this flora covers all of France. It is therefore less targeted to our region, but is still fully comprehensive. The key has a somewhat different approach, but still many line drawing to help with critical points of identification. Less easy to see if a plant is to be found in our region. Just about compact enough for the field. No photos; not for the beginner.
Flore des Causses, Christian Bernard, Ed. Société Botanique du Centre-Oest 2nd Ed. 2008 Covering specifically the limestone plateaus of the Causses, this remains a classic, and is a comprehensive guide to the western part of our region. It does not deal with Mont Lozère, Mont Aigoual or the Cévenol valleys. Uses mainly the line drawings of Coste, but lacks the 'critical points' illustrations of the new floras.Easier keys, thus handy for the non-specialist. Few photos.
Flore de la France, Abbé H. Coste 2nd Ed. 1937. This is **the** classic French flora, still in extensive use today. This antiquarian 3-volume work can be purchased at huge cost, but more simply, it can be downloaded from Tela Botanica. In addition to a key, each plant has its own line-drawing and full description of the plant. It covers 93% of the 2158 species and subspecies found in the area of the Parc national des Cévennes. However, nearly half the names have been revised, and many species or sub-species have been merged or re-assigned. Because it is so comprehensive and highly regarded, much use of this flora has been made on Naturescene's site.

Flower guides with photographs of principal plants of our region (all in French; make sure you get these latest editions, as all have been extensively revised).

Flore du Parc National des Cévennes, Ed. Rouergue et PNC, 2nd ed. 2014 Excellent coverage of most plants likely to be seen on a first visit to the area. Coverage is by area rather than by family, and each plant has its own description with photograph, and usually the illustration of Coste.
Fleurs et paysages des Causses, Christian Barnard Ed.Broché 2009 Excellent coverage of most plants likely to be seen on a first the limestone plateaus of the western aspect of our area. Coverage is by family, and each plant has its own description with photograph, and usually the illustration of Coste.

Guide du Naturaliste Causses Cévennes Ed. Libris/PNC 2nd ed. 2014 Deals with our region by habitat. Excellent aid to understanding the plants in their context, with detailed description of the varied habitats. Many photos of the habitats, with lists of the plants to be found there, with a few photographed.

Flower books in English, with coloured line drawings/paintings covering in part our region (mostly also available in French).

There are many such books available, but coverage of our area is at best about 70-80% of those plants you are likely to find on first visit, and only about 40% if you include the rarer species. One problem is that you will have to sort through many plants right across Europe that don't exist in our area.

Alpine Flowers of Britain & Europe, Grey-Wilson, Blamey Ed. Collins Pocket Guide, 2001 Pocket sized; the best single choice
Wild Flowers of Britain & Northern Europe, Grey-Wilson, Blamey Ed.Cassell,2003 Large; superb book with many more species
Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns of Britain & Northern Europe, Fitter, Fitter & Farrer, Ed.Collins Pocket Guide, 1984 Pocket sized. Last published over 30 years ago, but still available as it is such a classic.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the Parc national des Cévennes for their guidance, and their database of plants identified in the region and Tela Botanica for their exhaustive on-line resource for all French plants.