



## Vocabulary 101 for Gardeners

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The horticulture lingo that rolls off tongues of experienced gardeners may be intimidating or confusing. Since it is back to school for the kids, now is a good time to review some gardening vocabulary. These definitions will solve some misconceptions, but they'll also impress your friends at bridge or the weekend barbecue, when you use them in complete and logical sentences!

**Accent plant** – Plant used in a bed or border to emphasize contrasts of height, color, and/or texture.

**Annuals** - Plants that live only one growing season. They germinate from seed, grow foliage, flower, set seed, and die within one year. Winter annuals such as pansies and snapdragons grow in cooler weather, while summer annuals such as marigolds and zinnias prefer the heat.

**Biennials** - Plants that normally require two growing seasons to complete their lifecycle. Vegetative growth occurs the first year; flowering and fruiting (seeding) occur in the second season. Foxgloves are biennials.

**Blue** – Yes, everyone knows the color blue except maybe horticulturists. You see there are very few "true" blue flowers in nature. Some varieties like ageratums and petunias are labeled blue (due to wishful thinking by breeders), when really they are purple.

**Bolt** - Herbs or vegetables that flower prematurely. A stress such as sudden hot weather usually triggers this growth rush. Cilantro, lettuce, and spinach commonly bolt.

**Bt or Bacillus thuringiensis** – Powdered bacteria that controls caterpillars. Bt is mixed with water and sprayed on leaves. Caterpillars nibble the leaves, get sick, and die.

**Chlorosis** - Leaves that yellow because they lose chlorophyll from low light levels, disease, or mineral deficiency. Iron induced chlorosis (yellow leaves with green veins) is very common.

**Deadhead** – No, I'm not talking about the band groupies. This term means cutting wilted or dead flowers from the plant to encourage new bloom.

**Dormancy** – Period of inactivity or physiological rest, especially in bulbs, buds, seeds, and spores.

Herbaceous plants – Non-woody plants that die back (lose top-growth and become dormant) at the end of the growing season (usually autumn), overwinter by means of underground rootstocks, and resume growth in spring.

N-P-K - The numbers on fertilizer always in the same element order. N is for nitrogen, which gives dark green color to plants and stimulates foliage growth. P is for phosphorus, which stimulates the formation and growth of roots, flowers, and seeds. K is for potassium, which is used throughout the plant and is important for vigor and resistance to disease.

Perennials - These are plants that live for more than two years. Usually refers to herbaceous plants and not woody trees or shrubs.

Phloem - Vascular tissue that transports synthesized carbohydrates from leaf veins to the rest of the plant.

Pinch back - This is one time that pinching isn't impolite. Using thumb and forefinger to nip off tips of branches to force growth of side shoots for a bushier plant.

Prostrate or procumbens – Describes a plant with spreading or trailing stems lying flat on the ground. It's a clue that the plant is a groundcover or would work in a hanging basket.

Rosette – A dense whorl of leaves arising from a plant's central point usually at or near ground level.

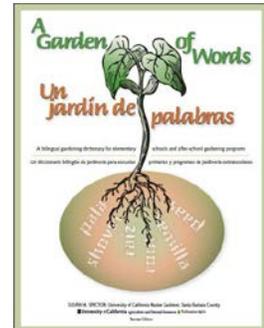
Suckers – I could have fun here. Shoots that arise below soil level usually from the roots or shoots that arise from the rootstock of a grafted plant.

Specimen plant - Ornamental tree or shrub grown in a prominent position in the landscape, where it can be viewed from many angles.

Variegated or variegata - Leaves that are edged or striped with another color, often green with white.

Venation – Vein patterns in leaves, such as parallel or netted venation.

Xylem – Vascular tissue that transports water and mineral nutrients from roots to shoots; the primary component of wood in trees.



This handy booklet can be downloaded for free. Go to <http://cetulare.ucdavis.edu> and click on Master Gardener.

August 1, 2013