

July 31, 2019



Clarkia amoena named after Captain William Clark

What's in a Name?

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While vacationing in England a few years ago, I visited the London Garden Museum in the 15th century St. Mary-at-Lambeth Church on the south bank of the Thames, across the river from the Houses of Parliament. The historic church was deconsecrated in 1973, then rescued and repurposed as a Garden Museum because it was the final resting place of John Tradescant (1570-1638), Britain's first great gardener and plant hunter. One of my favorite plants, *Tradescantia* or Spiderwort, is named for him because he brought it back to England from Virginia for cultivation in the early 1600s.

While walking in the Sherwood Demonstration Garden in Placerville one fine day last fall, I was struck by how many plant names, or parts of them, strongly resembled surnames, some familiar and others not so familiar. Loving history as much as I love gardening, I did a little research and was delighted to learn about the "Golden Age of the Plant Hunters" when scientists, botanists and adventurers were traveling the globe in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, looking for new discoveries.

Monarda or Bee Balm, endemic to North America, was named for Nicholas Monardes (1493-1588), a Spanish botanist who wrote a book in 1594 describing plants of the New World. William Richard Carles (1848-1929) was an English diplomat and keen botanist. While working in China, Japan and Korea, he sent back plants to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew near London, where *Viburnum carlesii*, the fragrant Korean Spice Bush, was named for him.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist who formalized the naming of plants and animals by giving them two-part names, the first part generic or "genus" and the second specific or "species". Although he didn't discover the genus, he gave the Monarch butterfly-loving plants known as milkweed the generic name *Asclepius* in honor of the ancient Greek god of medicine.

Our Pacific Madrone gets its botanical name, *Arbutus menziesii*, from Archibald Menzies (1754-1842), an English surgeon and naturalist, who sailed with *HMS Discovery* on George Vancouver's voyage around the world.

July 31, 2019

Although its botanical name, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, commemorates Menzies, the Douglas Fir gets its popular name from Scotsman David Douglas (1799-1834), a botanist who headed several expeditions to the Pacific Northwest. In addition to introducing the Douglas Fir into cultivation in Europe, he also did the same for many other Pacific Northwest trees and plants including the Sugar, Lodgepole and Ponderosa Pines as well as the California Poppy and Penstemon. Douglas died mysteriously at age 35 while climbing Mauna Kea on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Plenty of plant explorers had rich patrons who made their travels possible. When the common Blanket Flower was discovered in the Americas in the 18th century, M. Gaillard de Charentonneau, an 18th century French magistrate and patron of botany, was rewarded for his love of plants. It was named *Gaillardia* in his honor.

Not all plant hunters or their patrons were from Europe. Our own Lewis & Clark discovered their fair share of plants, including *Philadelphus lewisii* named after Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809) and *Clarkia amoena*, named after Captain William Clark (1770-1838). The great pathfinder, John C. Fremont (1813-1890), did not exactly discover *Fremontodendron*, since native Americans had been using it for centuries for medicinal purposes. Nevertheless, when it was cultivated as an ornamental plant, Fremont got the glory.

Of course, you don't have to be an explorer to have a plant named in your honor. Harry Lauder (1870-1950), a Scottish vaudevillian entertainer in the United Kingdom in the early 1900s, worked with a distinctive gnarled walking stick as part of his act. When it came time in the early 1900s to give a common name to *Corylus avellana* "Contorta", a shrub with twisted and contorted branches, his stick immediately came to mind and it was called "Harry Lauder's Walking Stick".

Celebrities seem to hold a special place in the hearts of rose hybridizers. *Rosa* "Barbra Streisand" is a hybrid tea shrub rose with purple flowers, *Rosa* "Doris Day" is a floribunda shrub rose with yellow flowers, *Rosa* "Dick Clark" is a grandiflora shrub rose with cream/cherry red flowers, and *Rosa* "Marilyn Monroe" is a hybrid tea shrub rose with apricot flowers.

If you would like to test your own plant hunting skills, visit the Sherwood Demonstration Garden (SDG) in Placerville on Friday and Saturday mornings from 9 am to noon through October. You will find many of the plants described above in the SDG's 16 individual themed gardens. But I'm not going to tell you exactly where to find them. I wouldn't want to spoil your adventure.

Key to locating plants in Sherwood Demonstration Garden:

Species – SDG Garden

Tradescantia or Spiderwort -- Shade

Monarda or Bee Balm -- Cottage & Butterfly

Viburnum carlesii or Korean Spice Bush -- Japanese

Asclepius or Milkweed -- Children's, Native & Butterfly

Eschscholzia californica or California Poppy – Native

Penstemon spp -- All Stars

Gaillardia or Blanket Flower -- Shade

Clarkia amoena -- Native

Fremontodendron spp -- Native

Corylus avellana "Contorta" -- Japanese

Rosa "Barbra Streisand"; *Rosa* "Doris Day"; *Rosa* "Dick Clark"; *Rosa* "Marilyn Monroe" – Rose

July 31, 2019

On Saturday, August 3, from 9:00 to 12:00, Master Gardeners will be holding their Open Garden Day at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Dr. in Placerville, with guided tours available to guests arriving by 9:15.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512), or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener e-news](http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener-e-news). Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.