



# WHAT'S IN A NAME? USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Learn some vocabulary to help you read plant labels.

## Components of a scientific name

*Achillea millefolium*

Genus name

Specific epithet

### Straight Species

**Example:** *Achillea millefolium*  
A plant species that has not been bred or modified in any way. These plants should look exactly like a plant of the same species growing in the wild (i.e., a wild-type). A straight species is not necessarily a native plant, or harvested from a local population.

### Subspecies

**Example:** *Achillea millefolium* ssp. *lanulosa*  
A plant population geographically isolated from others of the same species. Denoted with 'ssp.' between the species and subspecies name.

### Variety

**Example:** *Achillea millefolium* var. *occidentalis*  
A variety is a naturally occurring form of a plant population within a species, such as a white-flowered form of a normally pink-flowered plant. Varieties are denoted with 'var.' between the species and variety name.

### Cultivar

**Example:** *Achillea millefolium* 'Calistoga'  
Cultivar = cultivated variety. Cultivars are plant forms developed by humans, rather than those that are naturally occurring. Sometimes cultivars are developed from naturally occurring varieties, but they are bred to be distinct, uniform, and stable, and they are also named. A cultivar name is listed in single quotation marks following the scientific name of a plant.

### Hybrid Cultivar

**Example:** *Achillea* 'Moonshine'  
Hybrids are plants with parents from 2+ different species or genera. Like cultivars, hybrid cultivars have a name listed in single quotation marks, but they typically only have the genus listed before the cultivar name. Some hybrid cultivars have an 'x' in their name, between the genus and cultivar name.

### Ecotype

A plant that is adapted to grow in a specific ecological region. Its form, function, and growth habits are well adapted to the place where it grows. For example, if you're planting in eastern Oregon, you might seek out an eastern yarrow ecotype, as it will be better adapted to the climate, compared to one grown on the Oregon coast.

Want more information on how to  
identify and buy native plants?

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# WHAT'S IN A NAME? READING PLANT LABELS

Learn how to identify a few common plant types sold at nurseries and garden stores.

Achillea millefolium



Yarrow

**Plant type:**  
Straight Species

**How to tell:**  
The plant's scientific name (genus & specific epithet) is listed, without any other names in single quotation marks.

Achillea millefolium  
'Calistoga'



Yarrow

**Plant type:**  
Cultivar

**How to tell:**  
The plant's scientific name (genus & specific epithet) is followed by a name in single quotation marks ('Calistoga').

Achillea  
'Moonshine'



Yarrow

**Plant type:**  
Hybrid Cultivar

**How to tell:**  
Only the plant's genus is listed, followed by a name in single quotation marks ('Moonshine').


**WESTERN YARROW**  
*Achillea millefolium* var. *occidentalis*  
OPEN POLLINATED SEED



**Plant type:**  
Variety

**How to tell:**  
The plant's scientific name is followed by "var." and a variety name listed in italics.

**YARROW**  
*Achillea millefolium* ssp. *lanulosa*  
OPEN POLLINATED SEED



**Plant type:**  
Subspecies

**How to tell:**  
The plant's scientific name is followed by "ssp." and a subspecies name listed in italics.