

Pronunciation of Latin Names

Many gardeners find Latin botanical names intimidating. This need not be so, as the pronunciation of botanical Latin is quite regular. The English pronunciation of Latin in botany, as in many other academic disciplines, follows the traditional English pronunciation of Latin and differs from the reconstructed classical pronunciation, which is what you learn when studying the Latin language.

An excellent and detailed explanation of the traditional English pronunciation of Latin is available on Wikipedia at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_English_pronunciation_of_Latin

In this system, once the position of stress is known, all other details of pronunciation follow automatically. There is one important category of exception to this in botanical names, however: When a name is derived from the name of a person or place, that part of the name is pronounced as nearly as possible to its pronunciation in the original language. Thus the “gates” in *gatesii*, refers to the American missionary T. G. Gates, and is pronounced as usual in English. In the list that follows, these non-Latin name elements are set off in square brackets.

This list follows the convention used in a number of botanical references: an acute accent indicates a short vowel, a grave accent a long vowel. These are pronounced as follows:

á	can	à	cane
ár	part	àr	area
é	bed	è	fee
í, ý	bid	ì, ù	wine
ó	pod	ò	bone
ú	bud	ù	pure

In addition, I’ve used *ä* for the stressed broad *a* as in “father.”

Please refer to the Wikipedia article cited above for the pronunciation of consonants and unstressed vowels. Although the system appears complicated, once mastered it will seem quite natural; the botanical names are pronounced just as other technical terms taken from Latin (*formula*, *alibi*, etc.).

acutíloba	[bloudow]ii	ibèrica	[pérrier]i
aequíloba	bohémica	illýrica	polónica
afghánica	camíllae	imbricàta	pseudopùmila
[albert]ii	cengiálti	junònia	pùmila
álbicans	chamaeiris	[kashmir]iàna	purpureobráctea
[alexeénko]i	cläusii	[korolków]ii	[reichenbäch]ii
aphýlla	croàtica	lineàta	[samàri]ae
arenària	dalmàtica	lineolàta	[sär]i
atofúsca	[darwäs]ica	[lortétt]ii	scariòsa
atropurpùrea	elegantíssima	lutéscens	[schächt]ii
áttica	florentina	lycòtis	[sprénger]i
auranítica	furcàta	màriae	stolonifera
[babadäg]ica	[gàtes]ii	mèda	suavèolens
balkàna	[hàyne]i	nìgricans	taòchia
[bärnum]ae	[hoog]iàna	obliénsis	táurica
[belouin]ii	hùmilis	pállida	[timofejév]ii
bicapitàta	hungárica	paradóxa	variegàta