tree with a single trunk and strap-like foliage as a palm tree — *Cordyline australis*. However, further inland, dark evergreen trees often used to screen houses are also known as palm trees, referring to *Taxus baccata*, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* or *Cupressocyparis leylandii*.

Scientific names are generally derived from Latin and Greek, for example, *Rhododendron*, *Rhodo*, rose, and *dendron*, tree, in Greek, or from a Latinized form of some language, for example, *Magnolia grandiflora* named for a French botanist, Pierre Magnol, and *grandiflora*, large flower. Cultivar names are derived from various sources. Some are Latinized forms of English (e.g. *Euonymus japonicus* ‘Variegata’), some have attractive commercial names such as *Choisya ternata* ‘Sundance’, while others are named for a garden or nursery where the plant was raised e.g. *Solanum crispum* ‘Glasnevin’.

**Why do Plant Names Change?**

Further examination of plant specimens, in herbaria, in the wild or as a result of DNA analysis, provides botanists with new information about plant identification and a revision of plant names ensues. Some plant names revert to an older name, e.g. *Viburnum fragrans* is now *Viburnum farreri*, while others are ‘sunk’, combined in other species, e.g. *Hydrangea petiolaris* is now *H. anomala* var. *petiolaris*.

Plant nomenclature is regulated by the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (Greuter et al., 2000) and the International Code for Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (Brickell et al., 2004). The former deals with ‘wild plants’, which may occur in the wild or may be cultivated, and the latter deals with ‘cultivars’, which are also cultivated.

In this book, family names and names of genera are taken from the *Handbook of North European Garden Plants* (Cullen, 2001) and species names and names below the species classification are taken from the *RHS Plant Finder 2005–2006* (Lord, 2005).

**What’s in a Name**

The editors of the *RHS Plant Finder 2005–2006* quote W.J. Bean from his preface for the first edition of *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*. ‘The question of nomenclature is always a vexed one. The only thing certain is that it is impossible to please everyone.’ First published in 1914, Bean’s comment still holds true and his comprehensive treatment of trees and shrubs, now in its eighth edition, remains a classic.

While plant names are necessary in landscape design and in horticulture so that correct plant selection or plant management can be undertaken, the words of Romeo to Juliet in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, ‘What’s in a name? that which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet,’ are a reminder that a plant is more than the name it has been given. However, plant names can assist the landscape designer or horticulturist in plant selection and management and be an aide-memoire in plant identification.
An explanation of plant names is given in Stearn (1992). Scientific names of plants can sometimes give a clue to the use of a plant in design or to its cultural requirements. Some words refer to the habit or form of a plant, e.g. *repens*, creeping, or *fastigiata* upright-growing habit; the latter would never be a suitable ground-cover plant. Other names provide a clue to cultivation requirements; *sylva†ica* indicates a woodland or shaded habitat.

The country of origin can be helpful. Plants with the specific names of *chinensis* and *japonica* are widely cultivated in Western Europe. Caution would have to be exercised when selecting plants with the specific names of *hispanic* or *lusitanica*, indicating plants from Spain and Portugal with a more Mediterranean climate than in north-western Europe. They would be suitable for the milder rather than the colder regions of Britain and Ireland.

Many plant names give an indication of leaf and flower type and can be a useful tool for a person checking a delivery from a nursery. A consignment of plants with the specific name of *microphyl†a* ought to have a small leaf and a plant with the specific name of *altern†ifolia* would have alternate rather than opposite foliage.

While some names do not provide any clue to cultivation or identification, they provide a link with previous generations of plant collectors, plant breeders and nurseries.

### Geographical

- *Aucuba japonica*  
  Japan
- *Sorbus hupehensis*  
  Hubei, a region in western China
- *Genista hispanic†a*  
  Spain
- *Thuja orientalis*  
  the Orient
- *Ulex europaeus*  
  Europe
- *Prunus lusitanica*  
  Portugal
- *Carpenteria californica*  
  California
- *Acer coppadocicum*  
  Cappadocia (Turkey)

### Habitat – clue to cultivation

- *Fagus sylva†ica*  
  woodland
- *Pinus sylvestri†s*  
  woodland
- *Acer campe†ste*  
  of the field
- *Grisel†inia littoralis*  
  seashore
- *Pinus nigra var. maritima*  
  maritime

### Habit – shape/outline

- *Ceanothus thyrsiflor†us var. repens*  
  creeping or spreading
- *Rosmarinus officinalis*  
  prostrate or spreading
- *group*
Plant Identification – an Introduction

Chapter 3

Names alluding to other plants

Pterocarya fraxinifolia

Robinia pseudoacacia
Carpinus betulus
Hydrangea quercifolia
Ribes laurifolium

Pyrus salicifolia cv Pendula

Pter (false), Cary (hickory),
fraxinifolia, foliage like Fraxinus (ash)
foliage like that of Acacia
foliage like that of Betula (birch)
foliage like that of Quercus (oak)
leaves shaped like Laurus nobilis (bay laurel)
a willow-leaved, pendulous Pyrus (pear)

Leaves

phylla (um) (us) folia (um) (us)
Buddleja alternifolia
Lavandula angustifolia
Rosa glauca
Acer palmatum
A. palmatum Dissectum
Atropurpureum Group
Rosa rugosa
Prunus serrula
Prunus serrulata

Cotoneaster microphyllus
Acer macrophyllum
Choisya ternata
Aucuba japonica ‘Variegata’
Ligustrum ovalifolium
Buxus sempervirens
Betula pubescens

leaf
alternate leaves
narrow leaves
glaucous leaves – a bluish-grey colour
palmate or hand-shaped
palmate foliage is dissected or finely
cut and deep purple in colour
leaves puckered
margins of leaves serrated like the
teeth on a small saw
margins of the leaves serrated with tiny
saw-like teeth
small leaves
large leaves
foliage in clusters of three
variegated foliage
oval foliage
evergreen
hairs on the young shoots
Scents and aromas

*Lavandula officinalis*  
plants with real or imagined medicinal properties, many are scented

*Ribes odoratus*

Flowers

*Magnolia grandiflora*  
large flowers

*Magnolia stellata*  
flowers stellate, star-like from the Latin *stella*, star

*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
flowers like that of a tulip

*Hydrangea paniculata*  
flowers in a panicle

Seed and fruit

*Cupressus macrocarpa*  
large seed

Names that are commemorative

**Parthenocissus henryana** was named for Augustine Henry (1857–1930), a plant collector in China and later Professor of Forestry in University College, Dublin.

**Sorbus sargentiana** was named for Charles Sprague Sargent (1841–1927), Director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. With no other basis than serendipity, plants that bear the name of Sargent are worth a search in specialist nurseries for cultivation in well-favoured landscape situations, e.g. *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana*, *Malus torimo* var. *sargentii*, *Prunus sargentii*, *Magnolia sargentiana* and *Viburnum sargentii*.

**Magnolia x soulangeana** commemorates two French people: Pierre Magnol (1638–1715), Professor of Botany at Montpellier and Etienne Soulange-Bodin (1774–1846), a horticulturist from Fromont near Paris, who raised this hybrid magnolia.

**Philadelphus x lemoinii** recalls Lemoine, a father and son of Nancy, France, who in the 19th century raised hybrids of shrubby species, including *Philadelphus* and *Deutzia*.

Scheme for the Identification and Use of Plants by Family

The schema for the identification, use and management of each family described in Chapter 4 is as follows.