

# Plant Botanical Naming Guide

It is an important requirement to use the correct naming conventions when writing botanical names.

Learners are expected to write Botanical names in the correct format for the following assessments:

Unit Standard	Description
829	Demonstrate knowledge of plant nomenclature
1676	Describe, identify, and select plants for landscape work
21031	Identify annuals, herbaceous perennials, biennials and bulbs and their use
24648	Describe the physical characteristics, and range of, woody stemmed plants and their use
29499	Identify a range of plants by botanical and common name, and their basic features.
31188	Demonstrate Knowledge of basic plant nomenclature, and identify trees used in arboriculture
31190	Identify and present trees found in New Zealand arboriculture situations

As a general rule, when writing the botanical name of a plant:

- If **handwriting**, words should be **underlined**, (*remember to underline each word separately*)
- when **typing**, use **italics**

The Table below summarises the Plant Naming Conventions Rules and provides examples

Type	ICN Naming rules	Plant example	Tree example
<b>Common name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common names are mostly in Māori or English. (For Māori names, macrons must be used correctly.)</li> <li>• Most start with a lower-case letter.</li> <li>• If the common name is a country or person, capitals are used.</li> </ul>	sunflower	Japanese Maple
<b>Family name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starts with upper-case letter</li> <li>• Usually ends in 'eae'</li> </ul>	Asteraceae	Sapindaceae

Type	ICN Naming rules	Plant example	Tree example
<b>Generic name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refers to the plant genus</li> <li>Starts with upper-case letter</li> <li>Is either in italics or underlined</li> </ul>	<i>Helianthus</i> OR <u>Helianthus</u>	<i>Acer</i> OR <u>Acer</u>
<b>Specific name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starts with lower-case letter</li> <li>Is either in italics or underlined</li> </ul>	<i>annuus</i> OR <u>annuus</u>	<i>palmatum</i> OR <u>Palmatum</u>
<b>Botanical name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The botanical name (<i>species name</i>) is the Generic name and Specific name combined, so the two rules above apply</li> </ul>	<i>Helianthus annuus</i> OR <u>Helianthus annuus</u>	<i>Acer palmatum</i> OR <u>Acer palmatum</u>
<b>Botanical Variety name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This name refers to a naturally occurring variant within the species</li> <li>Written in lower-case with var. followed by the variety.</li> </ul>		<i>Acer palmatum var. dissectum</i> 'Viridis' OR <u>Acer palmatum dissectum</u> 'Viridis'
<b>Cultivar name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This name refers to a cultivated variety</li> <li>Word(s) start with upper- case and are enclosed in single quotation marks.</li> <li>Follows the botanical name</li> </ul>	<i>Helianthus annus</i> 'Firecracker' OR <u>Helianthus annus</u> 'Firecracker'	<i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Katsura' OR <u>Acer palmatum</u> 'Katsura'
<b>Hybrid name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This name is used to designate hybrids, which are the offspring of two different species or genera.</li> <li>Use an 'x' in between species names</li> <li>Inter-generic hybrids between two genera are preceded by an 'x'. E.g. 'x' <i>Fatshedera lizei</i></li> </ul>	<i>Helianthus annuus x salicifolius</i> OR <u>Helianthus annuus x salicifolius</u>	<i>Acer. palmatum x pseudosieboldianum</i> OR <u>Acer palmatum x pseudosieboldianum</u>

**References:** The codes for plants nomenclature are found in the following links.

- [International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants \(ICN\)](#)
- [International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants \(ICNCP\)](#)