Correct Horticultural Names of Citrus Fruits


As a first requisite in considering the correct horticultural names of Citrus fruits, perhaps it would be well to consider what constitutes a valid variety name as recognized by pomological authorities. A few years ago the American Pomological Society adopted a "Code of Fruit Nomenclature," which now governs the naming of fruits and which furnishes the basis for deciding disputes as to the proper name for any particular variety. From this Code I will quote the more essential features.

Code of Fruit Nomenclature
American Pomological Society

This code aims to establish a simple and clear system of pomological nomenclature that shall be appropriate and stable. Accordingly it is urged that all persons naming new varieties of fruits choose simple one-word names that are fittingly expressive of some character, quality, place, person, or event associated with the source, time or place or origin of the variety.

The paramount right of the originator, discoverer, or introducer of a new variety to name it, within the limitations of this code, is recognized and established.

The term "kind" as herein used shall be understood to apply to those general classes of fruits which are grouped together in common usage without regard to their exact botanical relationship, as apple, cheery, grape, peach, plum, raspberry, etc.

I. FORM OF NAMES

1. Names of new varieties shall be of one word preferably, but two words may be accepted. Names of existing varieties shall not be changed in such way as to lead to confusion or loss of identity.

2. The spelling and pronunciation of a variety name shall be the same as that of the person, place, substance, circumstance, or quality from which it is derived.

3. A possessive noun shall not be used.

4. Initials should not be used as a part of a variety name.

5. A name shall not be formed by the compounding or hyphenating of two or more existing names, but this does not prohibit the formation of a one-word name by the use of parts of two or more existing names. The hyphen shall not be used between the words of a name. Thus, neither Bartlett-Seckel nor Bar-Seck may be used, but Barseck is admissible.
6. Such general terms as seedling, hybrid, beurre, damson, pippin, rare-ripe, bigarreau, should not be used.

7. A variety imported from a foreign country should retain its foreign name, subject only to such modification as is necessary to conform it to this code, and provided that names having a recognized English equivalent may be, but are not necessarily, so rendered.

8. The name of a person shall not be applied to a variety in his lifetime without his consent.

9. The name of a deceased person shall not be applied to a variety except through formal action by some competent pomological body, preferably that with which the deceased was most closely associated.

II. PRIORITY, USAGE AND DUPLICATION

10. The name first published for a variety shall be the accepted and recognized name except when contrary to the provisions of this code; but names established by usage in American pomological literature may be retained even though they do not conform to these rules.

11. A name once used shall not be used again for a variety of the same kind, except that a name once established through long usage for two or more American varieties shall not be displaced for either or radically modified unless a well-known synonym can be used in its place; or when no such synonym is available, the varieties bearing identical names may be distinguished by the addition of the name of the author who first described each, or by some other suitable distinguishing term.

III. PUBLICATION, DESCRIPTION AND CITATION

12. Publication consists in: (1) The public distribution of a printed name and description or characterization of the fruit; (2) the publication of a new name for a variety described elsewhere under a different name, number, or other untenable designation, the synonym being given.

13. Publication of a name may be made in any book, bulletin, report, trade catalog or periodical of public distribution and bearing date of issue.

14. But a varietal name may be established by current usage in the locality of its origin, when well-known, and shall be considered as published and have precedence over a later printed name for the same variety.

15. Complete description of a variety consists of a detailed account of the characteristics of the plant, foliage, flowers, fruit, and habit of growth, so as to distinguish it from other varieties of similar appearance.

16. The type of a variety is the fruit of the original plant; and type descriptions or illustrations shall be made from material produced by the original plant, or, when this is not available from a plant as near as possible to the original in a sexual reproduction, and preferably grown in the same pomological region.
17. The full citation of a variety name consists of the name of the author who first described the variety, and the name, page, and date of the publication in which the description first appeared. An author-citation following a name refers to the author of the original description of a variety: e.g., Turley, C. P. C. Names of authors and published works may be abbreviated, in accordance with the usages of this Society.

Adopted November 8, 1923, at the New York meeting of the Society.

With respect to the citrus varieties now commonly grown in Florida the proper names have been clearly set forth in the recent revision by our own Professor Hume of his book on "The Cultivation of Citrus Fruits."

In addition to the common Florida varieties, many varieties which have become more or less obsolete and rare are carefully described with valuable and interesting data as to their origin. This wealth of material in a standard book, which I assume is in every citrus grower's library, makes it rather a waste of your time to go into a detailed discussion of the correct names of the standard citrus varieties with which we are already familiar. One comment is however perhaps worth noting, namely the desirability of listing not only the accepted or valid name of established varieties but of giving any other names under which it may have been known at different times or in different places. The publication of such synonyms may save a lot of misunderstanding and some wasted time and energy, on the part of growers, anxious to tryout all promising varieties. For instance the "Hamlin orange," the valid and accepted name, is also locally known as the "Norris Seedless;" the "Everbearing," was at one time known as "Long's Everbearing," "Pelton's Everbearing" and more recently as the "Avon-Everbear." Greater familiarity on the part of growers with some of these old varieties would be worth while if only to avoid duplicating the trials of the pioneers in Florida, many of whom conducted Experiment stations of no mean proportions.

Investigations as to the names which are used in the different citrus regions of the world for the one and the same variety are of even greater importance. This will be referred to later on.

The question of trade marking the names of new varieties is frequently raised so that a statement of official policy is perhaps not out of place. A recent statement from the U. S. Patent Office on this subject reads as follows:

"Under the practice of this office, mere names of varieties of fruit can not be registered as a trade mark.

"Mere names of individuals are not registrable as a trade mark under the act of 1905, unless written or printed in a particular or distinctive manner or in association with other features."

There have been in the past some apparent exceptions to this rule but the present practice is the outgrowth of enactments and court decisions of the past half century.
This provision of the law makes it extremely difficult for the conscientious independent originator of a new variety to derive any adequate return for his labors. He is placed at a decided disadvantage as compared with the inventor of a mechanical contrivance. Because of this situation various proposals looking toward new legislation have been brought forward from time to time but the danger of lending support to the unwarranted exploitation of varieties of doubtful value or to renamed varieties of long standing is perhaps sufficient justification for maintaining the status quo. If all new varieties of fruits were subjected to adequate tests in the hands of a properly constituted committee having legal status, before being offered for sale it might be safe to allow the originators of such new varieties trade mark privileges similar to patent rights granted to inventors, but a program of this sort calls for detailed investigations of many complex factors which would often require years of delay.

Even under the most guarded conditions there would always be extreme difficulty in protecting a patented variety against infringement by a seedling of the variety or a very similar new origination.

There is furthermore every probability that the breeding of new varieties in the future will be largely in the hands of or in close co-operation with State or Federal agencies the results of which when perfected should be available to the public without restrictions of any kind.

Within the last few years great interest in the citrus varieties of the Orient has been awakened, particularly due to articles published by Dr. H. J. Webber and Dr. T. Tanaka. Dr. Webber who did most of his early citrus breeding work in Florida is now Director of the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, California. He made an extensive tour of the Orient a few years ago and has written enthusiastically of some of the citrus fruits he encountered. Dr. Tyozabura Tanaka, the leading Citrus expert of Japan was for several years associated with Dr. Walter T. Swingle in Citrus introduction work and has translated for the U. S. Department of Agriculture many important Japanese articles into English. His own writings are quite extensive, especially in the botanical field. These writings have brought into prominence a lot of citrus variety names, strange to our Western ears, and it becomes a matter of extreme importance to know to what extent we already have had experience with these varieties under some other name. It was therefore a welcome opportunity when last fall I was able to have Dr. Tanaka's company on a week's trip in Florida.

One of the varieties greatly stressed both by Dr. Webber and Dr. Tanaka is the Ponkan—a large soft mandarin fruit extensively grown in the Swatow region of China and in Formosa. This variety has a number of names in the different districts where grown, "Mit tangka" or "Honey-bucket orange" being one of the Chinese names most
often used. The Department of Agriculture has made several introductions of this orange in the last ten years,—after careful studies of the Ponkan had been made by Prof. G. W. Groff of the Canton Christian College, co-operating with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. From descriptions of the fruit, I had a suspicion that it was already growing in Florida and with the assistance of Prof. E. L. Lord and Mr. H. H. Mowry of Gainesville, I had located, several years ago, some trees locally known as the “Chinese honey orange” growing at Mr. Frank Jerkins’ place near Melrose, Florida. These trees were grown from seed sent from China by Dr. Parks, a Missionary in China, to Mr. J. C. Barrington of McMeekin, Fla., about 1892 or 1893. One of these seedlings survived the 1895 freeze at Mr. Jerkins place and is still alive, together with some budded trees of good size nearby.

Dr. Tanaka readily identified the tree and fruit as the Ponkan, confirming an identification of the fruit made for me by Prof. Miyazawa two years previously. This is the same variety which has been propagated and distributed rather widely in Florida as the “Wanurco tangerine.” It has not proven entirely satisfactory as a commercial fruit because of its soft puffy character. However, careful investigations made some years ago by Prof. Groff for the Department showed that this orange is at its best only when grown on a special stock, a small seedy mandarin, the Suen-kat, or “sour mandarin.” This stock differs from both the Cleopatra (or “Ponki”) and the Calomondin but might well be tried on both of these stocks until such time as introduced plants of the Suen-kat become available for trial.

The precautions necessary to guard against the introduction of dangerous citrus diseases require a rather lengthy quarantine period and the aseptic method of propagation developed in Washington for the safe handling of introduced Citrus, with a double transfer of buds, requires additional time to build up a stock of any new variety sufficient for field testing. Time, however, is cheaper than the spending of millions to eradicate some introduced disease, so it is time well spent.

Not only is the Ponkan grown on a special stock but under a special system of close planting and pruning to form small compact upright trees. This dwarfing system of culture may be as important as the stock in determining the fruit character. Dr. Tanaka describes this method of culture in the January number of the Journal of Heredity. As many as 800 trees to the acre are sometimes planted in Formosa.

Thus it becomes clear that Florida has had the Ponkan in disguise for many years. The “Kinneloa orange,” known in California about thirty years ago, is now also recognized as undoubtedly the Ponkan. It evidently did not suit California conditions as it has apparently disappeared from cultivation.

This case of the Ponkan or “Honey orange” is an excellent example of how essential it is to develop a reliable
synonymy of the citrus varieties of the whole world. It is rather a difficult matter as the same variety may behave in a vastly different manner in different regions. Except for the navel mark, the Washington Navel of Florida would hardly be recognized as the same fruit grown under this name in California or Arizona. Because of this "place affect" we are sending from time to time budded plants of our important standard varieties to be grown in China, Japan and the Philippines and compared with the local varieties in the region of their probable origin. In this way, the mystery of the source of the Valencia, for instance, may possibly be solved, which suggests possibilities in the way of securing better strains, earlier or later or more resistant to splitting.

The "place effect" or the influence of environment makes it necessary to reserve judgment when we read glowing accounts of some citrus marvel of foreign lands. It may well seem to be the "best orange in the world" to the writer and yet prove ill adapted to our conditions. Furthermore the habits of eating, and methods of marketing have much to do with the relative value of varieties. Most Orientals eat their oranges and pummeloes out of hand—not cut in two and scooped out with a spoon. They naturally prefer loose-skinned oranges, and rather firm large pummeloes,—the thickness of the peel is a matter of no great consequence.

Neither are the fruits put through such a strenuous preparation for packing as are our fruits. There is no soaking tank,—washer, dryer, polisher, grader and sizer to be encountered, the loose fruits going by basket directly from the grove to the markets in most cases. This makes a vast difference in standards of excellence. Our Citrus fruits must have shipping quality as well as eating quality and must first of all be produced in abundance.

While touching on the subject of securing the important citrus varieties of the Orient I am glad to be able to state that the varieties especially stressed by Dr. Webber and Dr. Tanaka have been on several different occasions introduced in this Country, varieties such as the Ponkan, Tankan, Sekkan, Wase, Satsuma, Kaopan pummelo and the Chamoudi orange, the famous orange of Palestine. It is not enough, however, to merely make introductions of varieties,—they must be studied in their original home as already shown with the Ponkan. These studies are being made as rapidly as possible and it may be found, as indicated by Dr. Tanaka's studies, that there are special strains originating as bud mutations, that are much more valuable than the variety commonly grown, and special stocks may be necessary to bring them to perfection.

The potential wealth of material in China and the Orient may be judged by the fact that a treatise published nearly 800 years ago, "The Chu lu" of Han Yen-Chih, lists 27 varieties of citrus grown in one district,—(Wen-Chow) each variety with a fairly good description. Dr. Walter T. Swingle learned
of this ancient treatise on one of his trips to China and arranged for its translation. Some of the statements of this early Chinese writer show an appreciation of the requirements for successful growing of oranges quite as advanced in some lines as that of our modern citrus expert. They knew for instance that fruit decay was largely caused by clipper-cuts, long stems and rough handling, and careful instructions are given as to how to avoid these faults in picking fruit. They knew that the tangerine comes true from seed and does not need to be grafted,—an observation that seems to still hold true to judge from a seedling Dancy grove now in existence near Hawthorne in this state.

Thus it appears that there is still much for us to learn about Citrus in its original habitat. A knowledge of correct names of varieties with local synonyms is a first step. We cannot be expected to adopt all these exotic and often difficult names and discard our familiar names, when such exist, but it is essential that we should know the important varieties by all the names they bear elsewhere, so that citrus specialists of whatever nationality may understand each other’s writings. With the great strides recently made in transporting and marketing citrus fruits, no citrus section can afford to be ignorant of what is going on in the rest of the world.

Mr. L. B. Skinner: I want to ask you about the Wanurco Tangerine?

Mr. Robinson: It's the fruit you showed me some years ago that you have at Plant City.