

POINT OF VIEW
AUTHORS' INITIALS IN SCIENTIFIC NAMES WITH
MULTIPLE AUTHORITIES

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An authority is added to a scientific name to provide clarity in the identity of the taxon by indicating its nomenclatural history. Names of botanical authorities in abbreviated form have been used since the Linnaean era to make scientific names less cumbersome, and Brummitt and Powell (1992, *Authors of Plant Names*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) have provided a guide toward standardization of authors' names, including abbreviated forms. *Phytologia* 91(1):62-63 (April, 2009).

To differentiate between botanical authorities when two or more phytographers have the same last name, addition of initials for many authors has become widely accepted (even required) in current publication. Different botanists are contrasted in "DC." (Augustin Pyramus de Candolle) vs. "A. DC." (Alphonse Louis Pierre Pyramus de Candolle), "A. Gray" (Asa Gray) vs. "Gray" (Samuel Frederick Gray), and "S.F. Blake" (Sidney Fay Blake) vs. "Blake" (Joseph Blake).

As a single authority, "B.L. Turner" justifiably includes initials because more than one Turner has been a phytographer. On the other hand, reference to B.L. Turner is unequivocal in "*Aphanostephus ramosissimus* var. *ramosus* (DC.) Turner & Birdsong" because no other combination of these names exists in botanical history. Similarly, *Gutierrezia pomariensis* (S.L. Welsh) S.L. Welsh is appropriate, but initials for the parenthetical Welsh are unnecessary in *Gutierrezia petradoria* (Welsh & Goodrich) S.L. Welsh. In uncommon instances where there might be confusion about the precise identity of one authority among others in a multiple authority, online resources usually enable one to quickly view the entire citation for a scientific name's publication, including the author's full name or names (with initials) and, in many cases, even the text of the entire publication.

Full citation of authorities with initials is appropriate to dispel ambiguity in the protologues of new taxa and in new combinations. But rather than adding critical clarity to the identity of the taxon, additions of initials in citations of multiple authors such as the following load up text with unnecessary and ponderous details:

Abronia bolackii N.D. Atwood, S.L. Welsh, & K.D. Heil
Antennaria dimorpha (Nutt.) Torrey & A. Gray
Xanthisma spinulosum var. *chihuahuanum* (B.L. Turner & R.L. Hartm.) D.R. Morgan & R.L. Hartm.

Those names are cited more readably and with equal clarity as the following:

Abronia bolackii Atwood, Welsh, & Heil
Antennaria dimorpha (Nutt.) Torrey & Gray
Xanthisma spinulosum var. *chihuahuanum* (Turner & Hartman) Morgan & Hartman

And because each of these names has been used only once, the taxa concerned also are identified with complete unambiguity by the following:

Abronia bolackii
Antennaria dimorpha
Xanthisma spinulosum var. *chihuahuanum*

Format in the Flora of North America North of Mexico volumes requires that all author citations are maximally formal, with last names in completely unabbreviated form. In general, however, insistence on extended forms of author citations in all situations seems unnecessary, especially where brevity and easy comprehension are concerns.

I greatly appreciate comments and suggestions for clarification from John Strother and Jim Reveal, but the little plaint registered here is mine, not theirs.