

Editorial

This thematic issue of *ABN* brings together papers on the classification of plants cultivated by man.

The systematics of cultivated plants requires a somewhat different approach compared with that of plants as found in nature. Often, more than focusing on biosystematic relationships, a practical and pragmatic approach should be applied, as many users need simple classifications that serve their needs. In this vein, it has been proposed that we consider the systematic units of cultivated plants as *cultra*, not *taxa*, and simplify their nomenclature. On the other hand, where modern techniques and approaches serve to unravel more details of the plant groups concerned, these proved to be very useful for improving classifications.

The two review articles highlight the history of the principles of cultivated plant classification, and the connection with wild plants in the often difficult to comprehend crop–weed complexes. Examples of problems in the classification of cultivated plants and their ancestors (such as in *Solanum*, *Tulipa*, *Lactuca*) are presented. Cultivar groupings are discussed for *Aster*, *Philadelphus* and *Tulipa*.

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The original idea for this thematic issue stemmed from Ir. W. A. Brandenburg, in the framework of the SLW (Foundation for Life Sciences) working group ‘Taxonomy of cultivated plants and their wild relatives’, now part of the KNBV (Royal Botanical Society of The Netherlands). This working group consists of botanists and agronomists in Wageningen and other vestiges of agronomical research in The Netherlands.

We hope that the reader will appreciate these examples of the newest developments in the systematics of our food and ornamental crop plants.

THE EDITORS