

ETYMOLOGY OF SUCCULENT GENERA BY CAROLUS LINNAEUS

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Although I have no training in Latin, Greek, botany or taxonomy, for purposes of this article, I will attempt to give you the Etymology (the study of origin of words) of the succulent genera that Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) [Carl von Linné upon his ennoblement by the Swedish King in 1762] described. In some situations the genera is named in honor of an individual—if not, the word will normally come from Latin or Greek origin. It's amazing the number of succulent genera Linnaeus described in the 18th Century that are still current today. All succulent genera (with exception of Cactus genus) information below comes from the six 2001–2003 Illustrated Handbooks of Succulent Plants by editors Urs Eggli and Heidrun E.K. Hartmann and the Internet.

Dicots = two embryonic leaves and are the first leaves to appear from germinating seeds.

Monocots = one embryonic leaf and is the first leaf to appear from germinating seeds.

{Dicots and monocots are two groups into which all flowering plants were divided.}

Eudicots = same characteristics as dicots with main difference in structure of pollen — a modern definition of dicots.

Adansonia 1759 (dicots in family Bombacaceae): Named after Michel Adanson (1727–1806), a French botanist, systematist, naturalist, taxonomist & biologist who discovered the Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) in Senegal 1749; 9 succulent species native to Madagascar, mainland Africa, Arabian Peninsula and Australia.

Agave 1753 (monocots in family Agavaceae): Greek 'Agave', daughter of Kadmos and sister of Semele in Greek mythology; also Greek 'agavos', stately, noble, illustrious, for the stately nature of many species, but also for the ferocious leaf margin teeth present in many species; a large number of succulent species chiefly in Mexico, also USA, central and tropical South America.

Aizoon 1753 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae): Greek, an evergreen plant; in the ice plant family of about 12 succulent species; in northern & southern Africa, from Canary Islands to Sokotra, Spain, southern Italy, northern Kenya, eastern India and Afghanistan.

Albuca 1762 (monocots in family Hyacinthaceae): Latin 'albus', for the similarity of some species of Asphodel (*Hyacinthaceae*); a bulb of about 5 succulent species in southern and eastern Africa.

Aloe 1753 (monocots in family Aloaceae): Greek 'aloe', Arabian 'alloch', Hebrew 'ahalim', names for the plants; a large number of succulent species in tropical and southern Africa, Madagascar, Jordan, the Arabian Peninsula and various islands in the Indian Ocean— a few species naturalized in the Mediterranean, India, Australia, North & South America.

Anacampseros 1758 (eudicots in family Portulacaceae): Greek 'anakamptein', to bring back & Greek 'eros', love; about 15 succulent species in Namaqualand (South Africa) and Namibia.

Asclepias 1753 (eudicots in family Asclepiadeae): For Asklepios, the ancient Greek deity of medicine; the milkweeds with a number of succulent species in North America.

Basella 1753 (eudicots in family Basellaceae): From the local Indian (India) Malayalam name of the plant; 3 succulent species in Madagascar.

Begonia 1753 (eudicots in family Begoniaceae): Named after Michel Begon (1638–1710), French Governor of Santo Domingo and promoter of botany; 8 semi-succulent to succulent species in Madagascar, South Africa, Guinea, Cameroon & Brazil, Mexico.

Bombax 1754 (eudocots in family Bombacaceae): Greek 'bombyx', silk, referring to the silky hairs surrounding the seeds. Latin 'bombyx', bycys "silk-worm, silk, any fine fiber; basically only one succulent species, *B. ellipticum*, with possibly a couple more, all transferred to *Pseudobombax* — grown in Central America (mostly Mexico) & some West Indies Islands.

Bulbine 1737 (monocots in family Asphodelaceae): Latin 'bulbus', bulb, an onion-like plant; a number of succulent species in southern Africa and Australia.

Bursera 1963 (eudicots in family Burseraceae): Named after (Dr med) Joachim Berser (1583-1639), a German physician and botanist who compiled a herbarium 'Hortus Siccus' of 3,000 specimens bound in 23 volumes

which was an important source of plant names used later by C Linnaeus; 8 succulent species in Mexico, southwest USA, northern and northwest South America.

- Cacalia** 1753 (eudicots in family Asteraceae): An ancient Greek name used by 1. (Dr Med) Pedanius Dioscorides (c40-c90^{AD}), a Cilician-Greek Physician, pharmacologist & herbalist who traveled as army surgeon with Roman legions in Greece, Italy, Gaul, Spain, Asia Minor & North Africa which gave him the time to study plants for medicinal uses and 2. Gaius Plinius [Pliny the Elder] (23-79^{AD}), a Roman cavalry officer, naturalist, scientist, historian and encyclopedist, who preserved information from some 2,000 previous books by 326 Greek and 146 Roman authors. *Cacalia* became a reject genus name in favor of the genus name *Senecio*; 3 succulent species moved to *Senecio*.
- Cactus** 1753 (eudicots in family Cactaceae): Latin from the ancient Greek 'κάκτος', *kaktos*, a name originally used by Theophrastus of Eresus (c370-287^{BC}), Greek philosopher, historian and botanist, for a spiny plant whose identity is not certain. The name *Cactus* has lost its genus identity falling into two main groups of 'core cacti': *Opuntias* (subfamily *Opuntioideae*) and 'cactoids' (subfamily *Cactoideae*), easily recognizable as 'cacti'; described 13 *cactus* related succulent species moved to other genera later by other authors.
- Carica** 1753 (eudicots in family Caricaceae): Latin '*Carica*', Karyan Fig (the fig originally from *Karya* in Asia Minor), 3 succulent species growing in coastal Chile, Pacific Andean slopes of southern Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, northeast to southern Brazil, Uruguay and northern Argentina in humid to semiarid forests.
- Ceropegia** 1753 (eudicots in family Asclepiadaceae): Greek '*keros*', wax, wax candle—Greek '*pegnynai*', assemble, unite, perhaps for the chandelier-like inflorescences of some species. A large number of succulent species found in Africa, Arabia, Asia & northern Australia.
- Cissus** 1753 (eudicots in family Vitaceae): Greek '*kissos*', ivy, climbing/twining plants. A number of succulent species found in mostly tropical and subtropical Africa and America with a few taxa in tropical Asia.
- Columnnea** 1753 (eudicots in family Gesneriaceae): Named after Fabio Colonna [Latinized as *Fabius Columna*] (1567-1640), Italian botanist, naturalist and illustrator where he described the response of taking valerian for his own epilepsy in a 1592 botanical book. 5 succulent species grown in Mexico, Caribbean Islands, Central & South America to Bolivia and northern Brazil.
- Cotyledon** 1753 (eudicots in family Crassulaceae): Latin "*Pennywort*" (*Umbilicus rupestris*), from Greek '*kotyledon*', cup, hollowed; because *Pennywort* was part of genus originally. A large number of succulent species found in southern & eastern tropical Africa & southwest Arabian Peninsula.
- Crassula** 1753 (eudicots in family Crassulaceae): Latin '*crassus*', thick; for predominantly succulent leaves. A very large number of succulent species main center of diversity in South Africa, with minor numbers found in the rest of Africa & scattered taxa throughout the rest of the World.
- Cucumis** 1753 (eudicots in family Cucurbitaceae): Latin '*cucumis*', cucumber, gherkin; i.e. the ancient name for the plant. 2 succulent species found in Africa.
- Cucurbita** 1753 (eudicots in family Cucurbitaceae): Latin '*gourd*'. 3 succulent species found in Mexico & USA.
- Cynanchum** 1753 (eudicots in family Asclepiadaceae): Greek '*kynos*', dog; & Greek '*anchein*', to choke; for the toxicity of the plants. A large number of species mainly in tropics and subtropics worldwide, few succulent species in temperate climates.
- Dioscorea** 1753 (monocots in family Dioscoreaceae): Named after Pedanius Dioscorides (c40–c90^{AD}), most influential Greek physician and herbalist of the first century A.D. & known as the 'father of herbalism'. 5 succulent species (& 4 varieties of *D. sylvatica*) found in tropical regions of all of major continents, i.e. Africa, Asia & Americas.
- Dolichos** 1753 (eudicot in family Fabaceae): Greek/Latin '*long*'; and also the ancient name of a cultivated legume with long pods; for the long fruits. 1 succulent species Tropical Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa.
- Dorstenia** 1753 (eudicots in family Moraceae): Named after Theodor Dorsten (1492–1552), a German herbalist, botanist & physician. A number of succulent species in the Greater Antilles, Central & South America, Africa, Madagascar, southern Arabian Peninsula, Socotra, Sri Lanka & western India.

- Dracaena** 1767 (monocots in family Dracaenaceae): Latin female dragon (from Greek 'drakon', dragon); from vernacular name of *D. draco*, "Dragon's Blood Tree", which is based on the red exudate of the bruised stems. 7 succulent species (& 1 subspecies of *D. draco*) found in Tropical Africa, Macaronesia, southern Arabia, Socotra, Madagascar, southeast Asia, central America & West Indies.
- Erythrina** 1753 (eudicots in family Fabaceae): Greek 'erythros', red; for the mostly red flowers. 6 succulent species found throughout tropics & subtropics.
- Euphorbia** 1753 (eudicots in family Euphorbiaceae): Greek 'euphorbos', well-fed; also to honor Euphorbus, physician to King Juba II of Mauretania after whom the king named the first succulent species he discovered in the Atlas Mountains. Many succulent species concentrated in Africa, Madagascar, Arabia & India with a few in Malaysia, Australia, central & tropical South America.
- Fevillea** 1753 (eudicot in family Cucurbitaceae): Named after Louis Éconches Feuillée (1660–1732), a French clergyman, botanist, geographer, mathematician & astronomer who collected in Central America, West Indies, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Canary Islands. 1 succulent species found in Brazil.
- Ficus** 1753 (eudicot in family Moraceae): Latin name of the edible fig (*Ficus carica*). This genus includes ±750 species, most of them tropical, some subtropical; however, only 2 succulent species *F. petiolaris* is widespread in Mexico and *F. vasta* in southern Arabian Peninsula, Socotra, Ethiopia, southern Sudan, Somalia, northern Kenya, northern Uganda, both species found in (semi-) deciduous forests or on rocks or rocky cliffs.
- Galenia** 1753 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae): Named after Claudius Galen (130–210AD), a physician, philosopher & natural scientist known as Galen of Pergamum. A number of succulent species found in southern Angola, Namibia & South Africa.
- Haemanthus** 1753 (monocots in family Amaryllidaceae): Greek 'haima', blood; & Greek 'anthos', flower; for the dark red flowers of some species. 3 succulent species found in South Africa.
- Heliophila** 1763 (eudicots in family Brassicaceae): Greek 'helios', sun; and Greek 'phile', friend. 5 succulent species found in South Africa.
- Hyacinthus** 1753 (monocots in family Hyacinthaceae): Greek name used for a plant by Homer, the flowers supposedly having grown up from the blood of a youth of this name accidentally killed by the god Apollo. A small genus of ± 30 species of which only 1 somewhat aberrant succulent species from Madagascar.
- Impatiens** 1753 (eudicots in family Balsaminaceae): Latin, impatient, sensitive, touchy; for the explosive capsules. A genus of some 850 to 1,000 species of which only 3 are succulent types found in western Gabon, Langkawi Island (between Sumatra & Malaysia) & northwestern Madagascar.
- Ipomoea** 1753 (eudicots in family Convolvulaceae): Greek 'ips, ipos', a worm, bindweed & Greek 'homoios', similar; for the twining stems. 600 to 700 species worldwide of which only 13 are considered succulent, mostly in southern tropical Africa -- one reaching into Asia.
- Jatropha** 1753 (eudicots in family Euphorbiaceae): Greek 'iatros', physician; & Greek 'Trophe', food. A good number of succulent species found in tropics & subtropics of both Old and New World, especially America and Africa.
- Lepidium** 1753 (eudicots in family Brassicaceae): Latin name for garden cress, from the diminutive of Greek 'lepis', scale; for the small scale-like fruits. 7 species of succulent leaves found in Australia but not known to be in cultivation.
- Mesembryanthemum** 1753 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae, subfamily Mesembryanthemoideae). There are only a few succulent species left in this genus after many, many succulent species were transferred or moved into other genera.
- Momordica** 1753 (dicots in family Cucurbitaceae): Latin 'mordicus', biting; either for biting taste of sap of ripe fruits or chewed appearance of grooved margins of seeds. 5 succulent species found in Old World, mostly Africa; dry bushland.
- Monsonia** 1767 (dicots in family Geraniaceae): Named after Lady Anne [née Vane] Monson (1726–1776), natural historian & great granddaughter of England's Charles II. 19 succulent species found in Africa, Madagascar & southwestern Asia.

- Othonna** 1753 (eudicots in family Asteraceae): Greek 'othone', linen, used in classical times for different plant with perforated leaves. A number of succulent species found mostly in South Africa with a few in East Africa and Namibia.
- Ornithogalum** 1753 (monocots in family Hyacinthaceae): Latin 'ornithogale' = Greek 'ornithofalon', "Bird's Milk", referring to egg-shale-colored flowers of some European taxa or to a Roman allusion of something rare or beautiful "as bird's milk". A number of succulent species found in South Africa.
- Osteospermum** 1753 (eudicots in family Asteraceae): Greek 'osteon', bone & Greek 'sperma', seed, referring to bone-hard seeds. 3 succulent species from South Africa.
- Oxalis** 1753 (eudicots in family Oxalidaceae): Greek/Latin 'oxalis', antique name for sorrels, from Greek 'oxaleios', acidic in leaves. Large genus with number of succulent species in South America.
- Phyllanthus** 1753 (eudicots in family Euphorbiaceae): Greek 'phyllon', leaf & Greek 'anthos', flower. Large genus with 1 succulent species in Thailand.
- Phytolacca** 1753 (eudicots in family Phytolaccaceae): Greek 'phyton', plant & Latin 'lacca', lacquer, varnish, referring to dark red fruits which are used as dye. 1 succulent species in Brazil to Argentina & Ecuador.
- Plumeria** 1753 (eudicots in family Apocynaceae): Named after Charles Plumier (1646–1704) a French Franciscan monk, naturalist, botanical artist and royal botanist. A number of natural species in Central America, Mexico, Caribbean Islands and northern parts of South America.
- Portulaca** 1753 (eudicots in family Portulacaceae): Latin, "Portulac", probably from Latin 'portula', small door, for fruits which open with small lid. Large number of succulent species from worldwide tropics & subtropics, mostly in Africa & South America.
- Pteronia** 1763 (eudicots in family Asteraceae): Greek 'pteron', wing, feather, probably referring to seeds, which are wind-dispersed. 1 succulent species from South Africa.
- Rhodiola** 1753 (eudicots in family Crassulaceae): Greek 'rhodon', rose & Latin diminutive suffix '-iola', the roots have scent of roses. Number of succulent species mostly in Siberia & eastern Asia, subarctic & alpine zones.
- Sedum** 1753 (eudicots in family Crassulaceae): Latin 'sedum', Houseleek, Stonecrop. A large genus with a good number of succulent species in North America, Central America, Asia, Europe, northern Africa & Near East.
- Sempervivum** 1753 (eudicots in family Crassulaceae): Latin 'semper', always & Latin 'vivus', living. A number of succulent species with a number of subspecies and some natural hybrids in Europe, northwestern & central Russia, Middle East, Morocco.
- Senecio** 1753 (eudicots in family Asteraceae): Latin 'senex', old man, referring to the white-haired pappus. A number of succulent species and subspecies worldwide, but mostly in Africa.
- Sesuvium** 1759 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae): A word of uncertain origin. A number of succulent species worldwide in the tropics & subtropics.
- Stapelia** 1753 (eudicots in family Asclepiadaceae): Named after Jan Bode van Stapel (1602-1636) a physician & botanist. A number of succulent species in southern Africa.
- Sterculia** 1753 (eudicots in family Sterculiaceae): Named after the Roman god Sterculius, the god of dung (from Latin 'stercus', dung), for unpleasantly smelling flowers of some taxa. 4 succulent species in tropical to southern Africa.
- Tetragonia** 1753 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae): Greek 'tetra', Greek 'gone', four, reproductive organs to describe four-winged fruits present. Number of succulent species in tropical & subtropical climates worldwide in southern hemisphere.
- Tradescantia** 1753 (monocots in family Commelinaceae): Named after John Tradescant (\pm 1570–1638) gardener to Charles I of England. A few semi-succulent species USA to northern Argentina.
- Trianthema** 1753 (eudicots in family Aizoaceae): Greek 'tri-', prefix for 3 flowers in crowded cymes. A number of succulent species in a broad belt around the equator.
- Viscum** 1753 (eudicots in family Viscaceae): Latin 'viscum', bird-lime, for very sticky interior of the berries. 1 succulent species in South Africa.

Yucca 1753 (monocots in family Agavaceae): Name first used in 1557 in a German travelogue & probably derived from name used on Hispaniola through Spanish 'yuca'. A number of mostly semi-succulent species in southern Canada, north, central & south USA, Mexico into Central America.

Zygophyllum 1753 (eudicots in family Zygophyllaceae): Greek 'zygon', yoke & Greek 'phyllon', leaf. There appears to be one or more succulent species in the Canary Islands.