CHECKLIST OF CULTIVARS OF HONEYLOCUST
(GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS L.)

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Of all the 14 or so species in the genus Gleditsia (3), only the eastern American G. triacanthos L. deserves the common name “honeylocust”. The “honey” in the name denotes the sometimes high sugar content of the pulp in the pods of some trees, especially in the more southern parts of the species’ range. And, even though honeylocust has recently found great favor as a landscape tree, the first cultivars selected in America were for the potential use of their pods as cattle food (9).

The genus Gleditsia was named for the German botanist Johann Gottlieb Gleditsch, and many Europeans still spell the name as “Gleditschia.” There is not much doubt that the valid scientific name for honeylocust was given by Linnaeus, but there is some controversy whether the thornless (inermis) trees constitute a botanical variety (var.) or a forma (f.) and who is the proper authority for the name. The most recent monograph (5) accepted the forma status and used Schneider as the authority, even though Isley has annotated all inermis specimens in the herbarium of the U.S. National Arboretum with “Provolone” as the authority. Rehder (7) considered inermis trees as a variety under the authority of Willdenow, but later (8) listed them as G. triacanthos f. inermis (L.) Zabel at the rank of forma.

In our opinion, there is some question whether thornless (inermis) trees should be given any particular botanical rank. It is true that thornlessness is a sexually inherited characteristic (4). Some botanists consider that true varieties must occupy a particular natural range, but thornless trees are scattered throughout the range of the species. Thornless trees may also be vegetatively propagated from thornless branches of genetically “thorny” parent trees, and retain the thornless characteristic essentially for the life of the propagated tree (2,6), even being used as a source of budwood for other generations of thornless propagations. Thus, virtually any tree, regardless of its genetic constitution, can be produced in thornless or inermis phenotypes. It is doubtful that any botanical rank presently exists that will adequately cover this situation. We would suggest that nurserymen, arborists, and horticulturists continue to use “thornless”, “inermis”, or “unarmed” — preferably “thornless” — as a significant descriptor of selected cultivars without regard to botanical rank. We would also suggest the uniform usage of “honeylocust” as a single word.

The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University is the recognized International Registration Authority for Gleditsia cultivars and, in 1961, published the first checklist for the genus (10). That checklist contained 30 cultivar names, 24 of them for honeylocust. We have been given permission by the Arnold Arboretum to prepare a revised and updated checklist for G. triacanthos. Of the 24 names previously listed, we have rejected 3, found earlier references for 3, and provided citations other than patents for 6. Plant patents before 1982 do not contain the cultivar names. In addition, we found 23 names published before 1961 and 23 names published since 1961.

Even though, in normal practice, cultivar names are enclosed in single quotes or preceded by the abbreviation “cv.”, according to the Code (1), we have chosen, for emphasis, to denote VALID CULTIVAR names in boldface capitals and INVALID CULTIVAR names in lightface capitals.

ARROWHEAD (Umapine Oregon Nurs., Milton-Freewater, Oregon, Wholesale Trade List, Fall 1981-Spring 1982, p. 9 — and perhaps in earlier catalogs) — this name should be considered as a commercial synonym for SKYLINE.

BEATRICE (Inter-State Nurs., Hamburg, Iowa, Cat. Spring 1955, p. 34) — “shaped very much like the American elm, wide spreading at the top”; thornless and usually fruitless. Original tree was a 50-year-old specimen in Beatrice, Nebraska.

BESSEMER (S.B. Chase, J. Forestry 45: 715-722, 1947) — without description. This is a very thorny tree according to D.H. Scanlon III in Tree Crops for Energy Co-

BILLINGS — Name found in the records of the Plant Sciences Data Center of the American Horticultural Society. Plants at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Chaska, Minnesota obtained in 1962 from Elmore Nurs., Elmore, Minnesota. Name invalid because of lack of published description.


BROWNII (Amer. Assoc. Nurserymen, 1963, Plant patents with common names, 1931-1962, p. 32) — 'Browni', without description. We have changed the name ending to proper orthography. Plant Patent No. 1514, September 11, 1956 by William L. Flemer III, Princeton Nurs., Princeton, New Jersey, but never offered for sale by any nursery. Plant slow-growing, with straight trunk and branches and without drooping branches. Name considered valid even though in Latin form after January 1, 1959 because the plant was patented before that date.

BUSHY (H.P. Kelsey and W.A. Dayton, Standardized Plant Names, 1942, p. 275) — BUJOTII.

BUJOTII (J. Neumann, Rev. Horticole, ser. 2, 4: 205-206, 1845-1846) - weeping habit, named for M. Bujot, the French nurseryman who discovered the plant.

BUJOTTI PENDULA (A. Rehder in L.H. Bailey, Cycl. Amer. Hort. 2: 650, 1900) = BUJOTII.

BUSHY (H.P. Kelsey and W.A. Dayton, Standardized Plant Names, 1942, p. 275) = ELEGANTISSIMA.


DIDEN (S.B. Chase, J. Forestry 45: 715-722, 1947) — without description. Pods have excellent flavor according to D.H. Scanlon III In Tree Crops for Energy Co-Production on Farms, U.S. Dept. Commerce, 1980, p. 21-31. This is probably the tree that won 4th prize in a contest sponsored by the Journal of Heredity (19: 216-224, 1928); entered by Miss A.C. Diden, Glen Mary, Tennessee. Pods had a high sugar content (29.5 percent), but a rather puckery flavor.

DWARF (H.P. Kelsey and W.A. Dayton, Standardized Plant Names, 1942, p. 275) = NANA.

ELEGANTISSIMA (C. Grosdemange, Rev. Horticole, n. ser. 5: 512-514, 1905, illus.) - leaflets smaller than normal, plant of dense, bushy habit; about 4 meters tall at 25 years of age.


FAIRVIEW (A. McGill & Son, Fairview, Oregon, Wholesale Price List Fall 1975-Spring 1976, p. 9) — strong sturdily habit of growth, form similar to 'Moraine' except much stronger.


GOLDEN (Surface Nurs., Gresham, Oregon, Wholesale Price List, Fall 1982-Spring 1983, p. 9; and perhaps in earlier catalogs) — this name should be considered as a commercial synonym for SUNBURST.

GOLDENHALO (Umapine Oregon Nurs., Milton-Freewater, Oregon, Wholesale Trade List, Fall 1981-Spring 1982, p. 9; — and perhaps in earlier catalogs) — this name should be considered as a commercial synonym for SUNBURST.

GOLDEN WEST (Powell Valley Nurs., Gresham, Oregon, Wholesale Price List 1982-1983, p. 11, and perhaps in earlier catalogs) — this name should be considered as a commercial synonym for SUNBURST.

GOLDWORTH (S.B. Chase, J. Forestry 45: 715-722, 1947) — without description. The pods are very thick (3/8 inch)
MANDAN (Woody Ornamental and Shelter Plants for the North Central Region, 1964-1968. Five-Year Report on Regional Plantings of a Mandan Honey Locust, 6 p.) — a thornless male tree that had survived in Mandan, North Dakota for 18 years (Mandan Accession No. 9870.) Distributed for testing at 25 trial sites by the U.S. Plant Introduction Station, Ames, Iowa. Not presently considered as a cultivar name by the originators.


MICROSPERMA (F.L. Spath Nurs., Berlin, Cat. 109, 1901-1902, p. 89) — without description.


MONOSPERMA (L. Beissner, E. Schelle, and H. Zabel, Handb. der Laubholz-Benennung, Berlin, 1903, p. 255) — although the authors stated that this was a horticultural variety, and not equivalent to G. monosperma Walter (= G. aquatica Marshall); and although it was accepted as a cultivar name of G. triacanthos by B.L. Wagenknecht, Arnoldia 21: 31-34, we believe it is synonymous with G. aquatica.


PENDULA (A. de Talou, Hortic. Franc. 1859, p. 155-158) = BUJOTII.


SEILER (Linn County Nurs., Center Point, Iowa, Cat. 1949) — large, widespread tree; almost completely seedless.


SUNSPASH (Richard Bush's Nurs., Canby, Oregon, Wholesale Price List, Fall and Spring 1981-1982; and perhaps in earlier catalogs) — this name should be considered as a commercial synonym for SUNBURST.

THORNLESS (H.P. Kelsey and W.A. Dayton, Standardized Plant Names, 1942, p. 275) — as equal to inermis.


VARIEGATA — name listed by B.L. Wagenknecht, Arnoldia 21: 31-34, 1961, but originally cited as "Folii Variegatis" in Kew Handlist of Trees and Shrubs, Ed. 2, 1902, p. 203 as a group, not a cultivar name.

Literature Cited

ABSTRACT


Field-grown, deciduous nursery stock is commonly slow to defoliate in fall, when it is to be dug, because of heavy fertilizer and water use in the nursery throughout the growing season. In areas where low temperatures pose a threat to the stock or hinder digging (if growers wait for natural defoliation), early leaf removal by hand stripping or mechanical means is common. Manual or mechanical defoliation is typically done early enough to allow digging just prior to the average date of the onset of temperatures that could damage stock or prevent digging. The threat of damaging cold weather may encourage growers to allow plenty of leeway for defoliation. The effects of early leaf removal vary from year to year, depending on stock maturity and condition, cultural factors, and weather. However, it appears that the process of accumulating carbohydrate reserves is not complete until nature is allowed to take its course and produce a "normal" leaf fall. Delay defoliation as long as possible in relation to the average expected weather conditions. Otherwise, plant quality and performance after storage could be reduced.