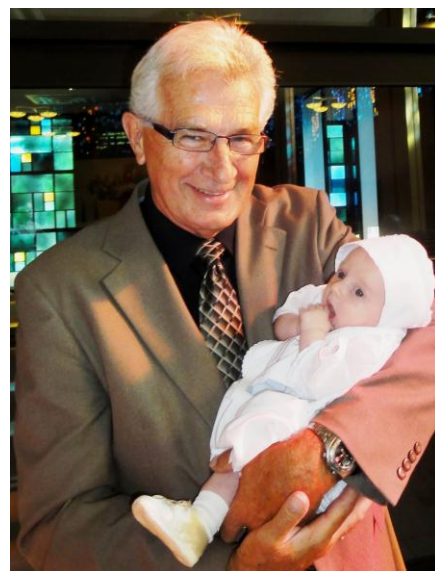


Selecting that perfect name for a newborn child can be a daunting task. Not only are parents left with the decision to select a name they admire but also one the child will like and be proud to live with for the rest of his or her life.

Sometimes names for children are selected based on what is popular or trendy. Often children are given a name in honor of a significant relative or friend. Sometimes a name given relates to a famous individual or an important event. My parents named me Theodore in honor of my uncle whose name was Theodore Wenzlaff. At the time of my birth, Uncle Ted was in Europe fighting in WWII. Fortunately, Uncle Ted survived the war, returned home and led a full and rewarding life. It has always been my honor to be his namesake.

Two weeks ago my son Anthony and his wife Amy had their newborn baby boy baptized. Rita and I were in attendance when they officially had him christened Anton Theodore. Needless to say, I am thrilled and deeply grateful they have chosen my name for their son.



You might be thinking, “What does this name thing have to do with gardening?” Like new parents, plant breeders who develop new cultivars are usually left with the daunting task of naming their creations. Although the genus and species name is already determined, the new cultivar name must be decided. Sometimes these new names tell a lot about the new plant.

Last week I wrote about the beautiful flowering cultivars of the genus/species *Hibiscus moscheutos*. In that article I referenced names such as ‘Kopper King’, ‘Dream Catcher’ and ‘Brandy Punch’. Such names may be somewhat descriptive of the flower, but I also think these names were derived in order to create excitement and interest with potential buyers. After all, who wouldn’t want a ‘Dream Catcher’ growing in his or her landscape?

Rita and I also have growing in our landscape two cultivars of the genus/species *Hibiscus acetosella*. Like *Hibiscus moscheutos*, these plants are grown for their ornamental value. However, unlike *Hibiscus moscheutos*, these are grown for their stunning ornamental foliage and not for their flowers. Both plants are growing in separate containers with other ornamental plants. Each serves as the thriller for its container. A thriller could be defined as the centerpiece plant with star quality —one that is tall, big, bold and beautiful.

One of these two hibiscuses has the cultivar name ‘Mahogany Splendor’. New for 2012, this plant has beautiful shiny leaves, deeply lobed with serrated edges. Each leaf has



a deep burgundy, mahogany-like color. Because of this outstanding color, I'm convinced the name 'Mahogany Splendor' is most fitting.

To the contrary, the other hibiscus has the unusual cultivar name of 'Haight Ashbury'. Like 'Mahogany Splendor', this plant also has deeply lobed, shiny, serrated leaves; however, its colors are multi-tonal shades of green, cream and pink. When I bought this particular plant, I was curious about its strange cultivar name.

One might recall that during the mid-to-late 1960's, the name Haight-Ashbury appeared regularly on the nightly news. Haight-Ashbury was and remains today an area within the city of San Francisco. During the 60's, the hippie culture congregated in that area. After closely examining the leaves of 'Haight Ashbury' hibiscus, I immediately recognized a strong resemblance to the leaves of the *Cannabis* plant. Just a guess, but perhaps the individual who developed and named the "Haight Ashbury" hibiscus might have been very familiar with the hippie culture or had a great sense of humor —thus the name.



The fact remains, selecting a name for a newborn child or a new plant can be a daunting task. Hopefully, my children are pleased with the names their mother and I chose for them so many years ago. My hope now is that grandson Anton will someday be proud of his namesake—Theodore.