

Carl Linnaeus: Father of Taxonomy

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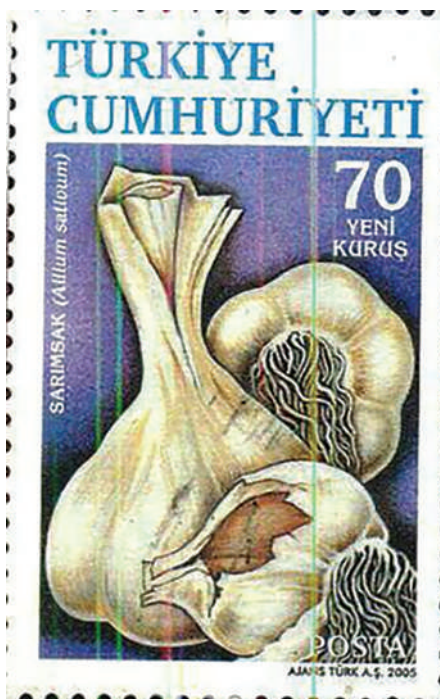


Carl Linnaeus and his paraphernalia.
Sweden, 1978



Carl Linnaeus. Bulgaria, 1957

Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), was a botanist, physician, and zoologist. He was born in Råshult, Sweden. Today he is known as the father of modern taxonomy and is also considered the pioneer of modern ecology. Linnaeus became interested in plants and moved to Uppsala University in the 1730s and became an extremely popular teacher in botany.



Example of binomial nomenclature—*Allium sativum* (garlic), Turkey, 2005

In 1732, he traveled 4000 miles through Northern Scandinavia (Lapland) discovering hundreds of new species of plants and carefully observing animals as well; he followed this in England and Europe in 1733. Linnaeus went to the Netherlands and obtained his medical degree from Holland in 1735. While he was in the Netherlands, he published his *Systema Naturae* (The System of Nature), in 1735.

Linnaeus was appointed professor of medicine and natural history at Uppsala. In 1741 and was allowed to extend his collection and investigations of plants. He continued to collect and classify animals and plants. Linnaeus's lasting service to taxonomy was his binomial system nomenclature (generic name and species name) in 1749, which remains unchallenged to date. He presented a formal classification of the three kingdoms of nature: plants, animals, and minerals. Each kingdom was subdivided into genus, family, order, class, and later phyla.

Linnaeus's classification system grew and grew, and soon his contemporaries were sending specimens for him to name, record, and classify. The initial folio volume was only 11 pages which later extended to 2,500 pages.



Allium cepa (onion) stamps, Turkey, 2005

Linnaeus had become convinced of the idea that all organisms reproduce sexually. As a result, he expected each plant to possess male and female sexual organs (stamens and pistils). "Sexual system," as Linnaeus called it, became extremely popular due to its practicality and for its explicit passages of erotic connotations. He also was the first, to use the symbol we use today for male and female.

The Linnaean system helped pave the way toward notions of evolution, an idea he had vehemently rejected as he was rigidly orthodox.

He was ennobled to Carl Von Linnaeus in 1757 and the London-based Linnean Society was founded by Smith in 1798.

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