EDITORIAL—Taking Stock

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THE Crop Science Society of America has been pleased with the acceptance of Crop Science and with the quality of papers that have been published to date. Crop Science, since the appearance of Volume 1 in January–February 1961, has proved to be an excellent vehicle for the dissemination of technical information on crop plant genetics, cytology, physiology, ecology, and breeding. This publication will continue to make a significant contribution to progress in American agriculture. In addition, foreign scientists will look to Crop Science as an invaluable source of information on research accomplishments in areas of vital concern to feeding the world’s “exploding” population. Unfortunately, the editorial standards of Crop Science are somewhat provincial and changes are in order to insure its acceptance and continued growth in national and international prominence.

Crop scientists pay only casual attention to the inclusion of botanical names in preparing manuscripts for submission to Crop Science, often preferring to identify crops by common name only, e.g., corn, wheat, and soybeans. The Editorial Board has condoned this laissez-faire approach to terminology, on the basis that the common names of crop plants are well understood in the United States and Canada. This has resulted in a bewildering divergence in the use of botanical names, so that a particular issue of Crop Science may include articles in which corn is simply Zea mays L. Authors who never omit botanical names in preparing manuscripts for other technical journals fail to follow the same procedure in submitting manuscripts to Crop Science.

There are no logical reasons why this situation should be permitted to continue. Henceforth, in recognition of our international obligations and the need for standardizing editorial practice, botanical names, including the authors of the binomials, must be given for all crop plants.

Similar arguments may be used to develop a case for adopting the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants. The suggestion that contributors adhere to the Code in the absence of specific recommendations, however, could result in confusion on the part of authors and readers alike. Confusion would arise from the fact that, with the exception of a limited number of forbidden practices, any one of several different methods for differentiating crop variety names is recognized under the Code. In addition, many people have felt that acceptance of the Code would signify immediate replacement of the long-accepted term “variety” with the term “cultivar”. In reality, noms and is primarily concerned with names of crop varieties from botanical (Latin) names. The abbreviation “var.”, however, refers to botanical varieties (varietas).

In the future, editorial practice must conform with the International Code variety names with single quotation marks. The appearance of such names in manuscripts, the term variety will be retained in this usage, and variety names will not be differentiated by single quotation marks after the first listing.

Considerable latitude will of necessity in which botanical-crop variety names appear at first listing. The following examples illustrate acceptable procedures: Agropyron desertorum var. dan; Medicago sativa L. ‘Ranger’, ‘Atlan.tic’ alfalfa (the botanical name need not be repeated if given in the title); and ‘Tiffine’ and ‘U-3’ bermudagrass (Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers.); ‘Ranger’ and ‘Atlantic’ alfalfa need not be repeated if given in the title; Stoechas ischaemum var. songarica (King Ranch). The International Code varieties only, and, therefore, experimental lines should not be differentiated by single quotation marks.

Manuscripts submitted after the author has included the botanical name, the title or when first mentioned in the text, and variety names by single quotation marks (at first listing).

Unpublished material (theses, papers, proceedings of work planning conferences, Abstracts, and various mimeographed notes) may appear as literature citations in a Crop Science manuscript. Authors should remember that references to unpublished material must appear generally available either in the United States or in foreign countries. References to unpublished material should be given as footnotes.

Adoption of these recommendations would standardize editorial practice, but they will not lead to any marked improvement in the quality of manuscripts submitted for publication in Crop Science. It is the author’s responsibility to prepare their manuscripts for clarity, omit superfluous material, and seek the advice and guidance of their institutions or agencies. The publication of many good manuscripts is the author’s responsibility.

Inadequate preparation increases the time that is devoted to manuscripts by reviewers.