

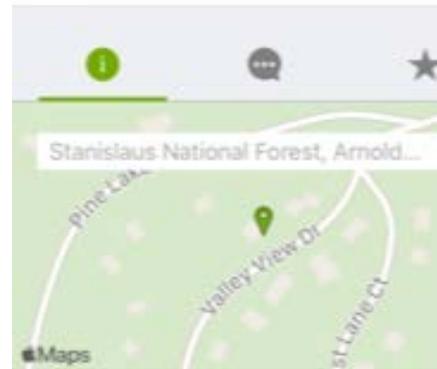
## What Is This Plant? by Ann Arshakuni

“What kind of plant is this?” is the question I receive most often. There are so many reasons why one would want to know. Is it a mystery plant that has shown up in your garden you planted from seed, aka a volunteer? It could be a plant you see in your neighborhood that you’ve envied as you’ve watched it grow and flourish, and you would like to mimic in your own landscape. Or, is it a native to the area that you see on your hikes that piques your curiosity?

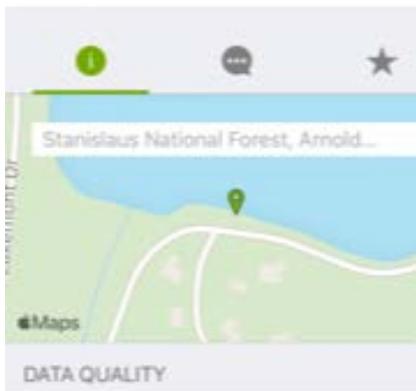
With advanced technology, there are multiple ways to determine what the common and scientific name is of a particular plant you are trying to identify. The botanical, or scientific binomial classification system, provides specific, positive identification for thousands of plants worldwide. Using this system eliminates the confusion arising from multiple common names for the same plant. Since the common name of a plant can vary from one locality or country to another, but the scientific name is consistent from one location to another. This is important in communicating about plants, developing or understanding the cultural practices and problems that may be associated with a specific plant.



Rose campion  
*Silene coronaria*



cardinal catchfly  
*Silene laciniata*



I do have a few favorite apps I use on my smart phone, and like other apps, it really comes down to your personal preference and what key pieces of information you are looking for. There are basically two different kinds of apps: field guides that work like plant identification books and walk you through the identification process, and photo identification apps.

For photo ID apps you take a photo, upload, and voila! Instant gratification. You do need to have a very clear picture, and generally one that clearly shows the flower and the leaves and stem. In addition, many of these apps will also want your location, to help identify the plant. Flowers that are blooming in the Sierra foothills in CA in April may be completely different from those in Anchorage, AK.

Most of these apps are free, and that concerns some people, but don’t dismay. Many are published by universities or are associated with research projects. So, when you use them,

you're contributing your findings to a research project. How cool is that?

West Virginia University suggests these websites and their associated apps to name a few: iNaturalist.org, PlantSnap.com, and leafsnap.com

UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden's Learning by Leading Habitat Horticulture team has created a project using iNaturalist, "Naturing at Home." You can contribute and collaborate on this project from the comfort of your home. There are tutorials on the website link below.

I use the iNaturalist app and others, in my yard, traveling, hiking and even from my kayak! It is so convenient, and you have a detailed record. There is no, "I know I took a picture of that plant, but when was it?" With the app, you can learn about nature, record your encounters with plants, animals, insects and other organisms. It connects you with experts who can identify the plants/animals you find. More information can be found at iNaturalist.org, and at arboretum.ucdavis.edu.

In the event you would like further assistance, you can always contact a Master Gardener via the web link: UCANR.edu, click on the "ask a master gardener" tab and submit your question, or contact the Master Gardener hotline: 209-533-5912.

*Ann Arshakuni is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Calaveras County.*

*UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties can answer home gardening questions. Call 209-533-5912 or go to: <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7269> to fill out our easy-to-use problem questionnaire. Check out our website at: [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardeners/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners/) You can also find us on Facebook.*