

English is a Crazy Language - By Stanton Southwick



Having learned to speak Spanish, I realize just how crazy the English language is. Consider this, there is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, 2 geese, so one moose, 2 meese? One index, 2 indices?

Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

Sometimes I think all the English speakers should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane. In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which, an alarm goes off by going on, we park on driveways and drive on parkways.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

Let's face it - English is a crazy language.

"'I am' is reportedly the shortest sentence in the English language. Could it be that 'I do' is the longest sentence?" ~George Carlin

Favorite Flora:

Bird of Paradise -Which One? - By Caryl Davies



Sometimes landscape architects receive requests for specific plant material. One that comes up often, especially during this plant's blooming season here in Las Vegas, is Bird of Paradise. The problem is... there are many 'Bird of Paradise'. Some do well here in the hot desert and another 'Bird of Paradise' does not. How do we know which one is which?

Plants are identified by both a common name and botanical name. A plant can have many different common names associated with it. Common names vary by the language, culture, and region. The scientific name however is very precise and based on a universal system, the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature. When you have the botanical name, you know the precise plant.

In the past, we've written articles about two of the Bird of Paradise, *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* (Red Bird of Paradise) and *Caesalpinia mexicana* (Mexican Bird of Paradise). This month is about *Caesalpinia gilliesii* (Common names: Yellow Bird of Paradise, Desert Bird of Paradise, Poinciana... you get the picture). Like the other two mentioned, it does very well here in our hot desert climate. This tough deciduous plant uses medium to low water and can grow rapidly to 7-10' tall and as wide. The leaves look 'feathery' and the bold yellow flowers have long red protruding stamens that give it an exotic look. It attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. The seed pods grow to about 2" and, when they dry, you can hear (and feel if close by) the split of the pod and release of the seeds which can literally explode outwards.

So which Bird of Paradise does not do well here in Las Vegas? That would be the one with the botanical name *Strelitzia reginae*. Yup, totally different plant that has the same common name as the *Caesalpinia*. Names do matter.



Desert Willow Golf Course, Palm Desert, CA
Joe Vickers

*Let's eat Grandma! Let's eat, Grandma!
Punctuation saves lives.
~ Anonymous*