

The importance of registering cultivar names with ICRA



Populetum mediterraneum at CREA-PLF in Bagni di Tivoli, Italy
Photo by L. Vietto



Salix alba 'Sericea' in Moscow, Russia
Photo by J. Kuzovkina

The general purpose of the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) is described on this website: <http://www.ishs.org/sci/icra.htm> and states the following:

- The International Cultivar Registration Authorities (ICRA) system aims to **promote stability in the naming of cultivated plants** by promoting lists of authenticated and internationally recognized names in a number of important groups of plants which are commonly cultivated. The ICRA scheme operates under the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (ICNCP)
- The chief aim of ICRA is to **prevent duplicated uses of cultivar epithets** within a denomination class (*Populus* or *Salix*), as well to ensure that **names are in agreement with the latest edition of the ICNCP**. When you file your Cultivar Registration Form the ICRA will check each new epithet to confirm that it has not been used before. **Registration is the acceptance of an epithet and its inclusion into a register.**
- The ICRA is also charged with ensuring that new epithets are **formally established**: published in hard copy, with a description in a dated publication corresponding to an existing cultivar. Only after such publication that the name has precedence for its use for a particular plant.
- The ICRA **records cultivar names**, not the cultivars themselves.
- The ICRA **publishes full lists of cultivar names** in each denomination class (*Populus* or *Salix*) and maintains records, in as much detail as practical, regarding the origin, history and characteristics of each cultivar.

The ICRA systems are a **voluntary, non statutory** ones and are **not responsible** for:

- any **legal protection** over the name or the plant (such protection should to be sought through statutory schemes such as national Plant Breeders' Rights, International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) or Plant Patents)
- judging the **distinctiveness** of the plant in question
- conducting **trials**

NOTE: The process of cultivar registration can be confusing: a few registration systems were developed for different purposes and various organizations and committees took responsibilities for different aspects of cultivar approval.

This especially applies to those countries where poplar and willow are considered important economic crops having significant effects on the national economy and the livelihood of people. Therefore, in addition to the registration of cultivar names through the ICRA, the statutory schemes now include international and national offices granting plant breeders' rights and providing legal protection for new cultivars, such as the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants in Europe or the US Patent and Trademark Office.

In some countries national regulatory bodies and committees issue performance certificates for new cultivars based on the requirements for high-quality planting stock, as determined through trials or tests, such as the DUST – Distinctness, Uniformity, and Stability Test. These committees often operate under a ministry of agriculture: for example, the National Clone Register of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA) in Argentina.

Consequently, various organizations grant certificates for new cultivars fulfilling various statutory regulations based upon different criteria, so that the registration of cultivars often requires submissions to up to three separate bodies.

In summary, the ICRA is different than the PBR or US Plant Patent system (US PTO), as the ICRA does not provide any legal protection, but its only goal is the documentation of the cultivar name. Registration of the cultivar name with the ICRA means that the name is internationally recognized forever.

While a name may be self-established when filed and registered with the patent offices (CPVO, US PTO) by a grant/patent, it is important to file the Registration Form with the ICRA, who compiles all records into a single international Register, which is uploaded onto the IPC website.

The Sub-Committee produces and maintains the Register of cultivar names in the public domain, which makes it available to the international community as a free service.