

PHILIP MILLER BIOGRAPHY

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Miller, Philip (1691–1771)—one of best known authorities in Britain on plants and horticulture during the eighteenth century—famous for his book editions of *The Gardener's Dictionary*.



Born in London, England in 1691, Philip Miller became a British gardener, horticulturist and botanist. Miller was appointed chief gardener and curator at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London in 1722—working at the garden the rest of his life. During this time, he was constantly introducing new plants to the garden—achieved by building up a wide circle of correspondents from around the world that included Sr Joseph Banks (1743–1820) of England, Dr Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778) of Sweden and John Bartram (1699–1777) of United States of America—and receiving specimens from Charles du Bois (1656–1740) of England. Noted Scottish gardener and botanist William Aiton (1731–1793) was trained by Miller at the Chelsea Physic Garden.

Miller's expertise was made widely known from his book "The Gardener's Dictionary", published in editions from 1731 to 1768 during his lifetime. The book covered methods of cultivation and provided a systematic botanical collection of all known wild and cultivated plants in Britain. He gathered together a herbarium of plants from all over the world—now a part of the Natural History Museum herbarium in London. The 7th edition of this book in 1759 partially adopted the binomial system of Linnaeus, while the 8th edition in 1768 fully adopted Linnaeus' binomial system.

Miller described the following genera in 1754:

Ceiba — from the tropical habitats of Central and South America.

Cereus — from the West Indies, South America to Argentina habitats. Credit was given to (Dr Med) Paul Hermann (1646–1695) for his 1698 genus name.

Opuntia — from North, Central and South America habitats. Credit was given to (Dr med) Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656–1708) for his 1700 genus name.

Pereskia — from the tropical habitats of West Indies, Central and South America. This name was re-established by Miller after Charles Plumier (1646–1704) first described ***Pereskia*** in 1703—later changed to ***Cactus*** by (Dr med) Carolus Linnaeus in 1753. Plumier named the genus in honor of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637).

Agave milleri was described by Adrian Hardy Haworth (1767–1833) in 1812 in honor of Philip Miller; however, it became a synonym of *Agave americana* described by Linnaeus in 1753.

Miller described a number of species, among them a small number of *Aloes*, a few *Agaves*, *Cactus*, *Cotyledons*, *Euphorbias*, *Mesembreanthemums*, *Opuntias* and a *Cereus*, *Crassula*, *Pereskia*, *Tetragonia* and *Trianthema*—most in 1768 coinciding with the 8th edition of his book—quite a few of these species transferred to other generic names later.

Miller became a Fellow of the Royal Society in London in 1730. He died from infirmities on 18 December 1771 at Chelsea.

References:

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