

# The Biography of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778)

- Born 23 May 1707 in the southern Swedish province, of Småland.
- Studied medicine in Sweden at Lund University, transferring after a year to Uppsala University. He finished his medical degree at the University of Harderwijk in the Netherlands in 1735, and then enrolled in the University of Leiden.
- During his studies at Uppsala, Linnaeus organized botanical and ethnographical expeditions to the largely unexplored Lapland region and to central Sweden. Linnaeus traveled extensively, undertaking many research trips to England, France and Germany but spent most of his time in Holland, where he was extremely productive in publishing many important works.
- Although he published over 180 works, one of his most famous is *Systema Naturae* (1735-70), which began as an 11-page pamphlet but expanded into a multi-volume work encompassing some 15,000 species. Another famous work is *Species Plantarum* (1753), where every known species of plant at the time was identified and documented.
- Linnaeus returned to Sweden in 1738 where he practiced medicine in Stockholm, specializing in the treatment of syphilis.
- Married Sara Elizabeth Moraea in 1739 and had two sons and four daughters.
- Appointed chair of medicine at Uppsala University in 1741. In 1742, he exchanged his chairmanship to botany and made three more expeditions to various parts of Sweden.
- His lectures attracted students from all over the world and he arranged to send many of them on expeditions abroad.
- Linnaeus became chief royal physician in 1747.
- In 1761 he was ennobled by the King of Sweden and became Carl von Linné.
- He retired in 1776 and was permitted to appoint as his successor his son Carl the Younger at the University.
- Linnaeus died on 10 January 1778 in Uppsala, after a lengthy period of deteriorating health. He is buried in Uppsala Cathedral.

# The Legacy of Linnaeus

Carl Linnaeus was a renowned botanist, physician and zoologist and one of the most influential scientists in history. He attempted to describe the natural world in its entirety and explore the relationships between groups of organisms and individual species. He is known as “the father of modern taxonomy,” “the father of botany” and has also been called the first ecologist. He was the first to define the human being as an animal among other animals, naming it *Homo sapiens*.

*Linnaeus’ most famous contributions to science:*

## Popularization of Binomial Nomenclature

Binomial nomenclature is the Latin scientific name of a species that is formed by the combination of the genus and species name (e.g. *Homo sapiens*). Although Linnaeus was not the first to use binomial nomenclature, he was the first to use it consistently, and it is now the scientific standard internationally.

## Taxonomic Classification System

Linnaeus sought a universal classification of all creation within a hierarchy based on morphological characteristics. At the top were three Kingdoms: Animalia for animals, Vegetabilia for plants and Mineralia for minerals. Kingdoms were divided into Classes, Classes into Orders, Orders into Genera, which were in turn divided into Species. Although, the classification system used today is based on Linnaean taxonomy, much has been re-classified due to new discoveries and scientific progress, especially with the advent of phylogenetic systematics and genomics.



*Linnaeus borealis*: Said to be Linnaeus’ favorite plant and personal symbol when he was ennobled, this plant is also the emblem of Linnaeus’ home province.



Statue of Linnaeus at Woodward Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma