

## PRUNUS OR HAWTHORN – WHAT'S IN A NAME? by Jim

Change is hard. The older you get the harder it becomes. So, before I get much older, I think it is time to adopt a new name for the Webb Burmese decoration "Prunus."

The Webb Burmese decoration name "Prunus" was first published by Bob & Pat Ruf in the book *Fairy Lamps – Elegance in Candle Lighting*, 1996. Prior to that, the decoration was simply known as a flower and leaf decoration by many Burmese collectors – it had no formal or documented name that was commonly known.



The pattern name, however, was also identified in 2003 by Betty Sisk in her book *Mount Washington Art Glass and Webb Burmese*. Ms. Sisk referred to the pattern as "Hawthorn." The decoration is used on many examples of both Thomas Webb and Mount Washington Burmese ware. Needless to say, I was confused and wondered why Ms. Sisk selected the "Hawthorn" name. Didn't she read the Ruf's book?

To many it is of little consequence what the pattern is called. I, however, believe there is sufficient rationale to settle on the name "Hawthorn." First, just what is "Hawthorn" and what does it look like?



As you can see the flower, flower buds, and leaves look very similar to the Webb decoration. Do not be misled by the white blossom. The blossom color is variable and pink is common.

Hawthorn is probably the most common hedgerow shrub, and can be found throughout the UK. It has lobed leaves and is covered with clusters of flowers in May. By autumn the flowers have turned into the red berries. It has long, sharp thorns and as a hedge forms a very secure barrier.<sup>1</sup>



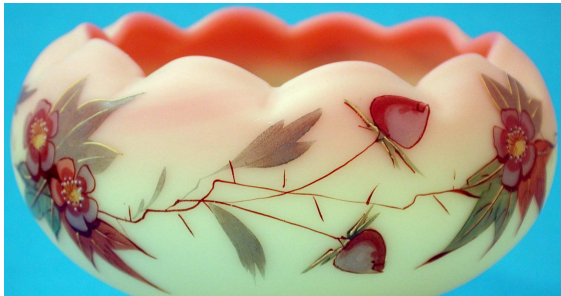
Prunus is a genus of trees and shrubs, including the plums, cherries, peaches, apricots and almonds. There are several hundred species of Prunus, spread throughout the northern temperate regions of the globe. The flowers are usually white to pink with five petals. Leaves are simple and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.rspb.org.uk/gardens/guide/atoz/h/hawthorn.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/gardens/guide/atoz/h/hawthorn.asp)

usually unlobed and toothed along the margin.<sup>2</sup>

As you can see, the floral structure is quite similar. Many will say, however, there are no thorns in the "prunus" pattern. That is not exactly true. While most decorations in this pattern do not show thorns, there are many examples, including fairy lamps that do. For example:



This Webb decorated Burmese fairy lamp base, R-678, clearly has "thorns." Although uncommon, it is one of many examples that do, including both Webb and Mount Washington examples.



The Mount Washington version of the decoration is quite similar to Webb's. It would seem that they either collaborated or copied each others decorations as they did shapes. This Mount Washington example also shows the Hawthorn's distinctive "thorns."

So, why one name over another? In discussions with Bob and Pat, it seems that

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<sup>2</sup> [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prunus](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prunus)

they had no basis for the name "Prunus" other than their broad horticultural knowledge. It simply looked like a flower from the Prunus family. Fair enough. But, now we have other evidence that the pattern is called "Hawthorn" — specifically, Mount Washington and Thomas Webb documentation.

The pattern name "Hawthorn" is listed as pattern number 2363 in the Jules Barbe Recorded Pattern Names, 1886-1888.<sup>3</sup> The decoration of Queen's Burmese Ware at Thomas Webb & Sons was carried out in the decorating shop under the direction of Jules Barbe, a Frenchman recruited by Thomas Wilkes Webb at the 1878 Paris International Exhibition.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the decoration name "Hawthorn" is also listed in the Mount Washington design workbook. The pattern name "Prunus", however, is not listed as a pattern name by either company.

So, with that long winded explanation, I think the time has come to adopt the name "Hawthorn" as the formal name for the well known "prunus" pattern.

My apologies to those older than me and find change difficult. ☺

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<sup>3</sup> *British Glass, 1800-1914*, by Charles R. Hajdamach, pgs. 433-434, 1966 Source: Stan Eveson, Thomas Webb & Sons Works & Technical Director, 1929 – 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Webb & Sons – Queen's Burmese Ware, Dilwyn Hier - [www.glassfairs.co.uk/Articles/burmese.htm](http://www.glassfairs.co.uk/Articles/burmese.htm)