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*Stillingia*

*Euphorbiaceae*

*Stillingia* commemorates an English botanist, author and poet, Benjamin Stillingfleet (1702-1771). After Cambridge he was tutor to a relative for fourteen years and in 1737 he and his charge began a grand tour of Europe. Back in England in 1743 he initially settled in London and then moved to Herefordshire where he developed an interest in botany. In 1759 he published *Miscellaneous Tracts*. This contained translated essays by the Swedish physician and naturalist, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) and his pupils, together with Stillingfleet's own treatise *Observation on Grasses* and a preface in which he explained the Linnean system of the classification of species (not familiar in Britain at that time) and argued for the study of natural history. Returning to London lodgings by the 1760s he turned his attention to music and literary diversions. It is he who is usually mentioned as the cause of the term 'bluestocking'. He would attend ladies' evening assemblies, where literary and learned conversation replaced card-playing, wearing informal blue worsted stockings instead of the expected formal black silk ones. Authorities note that the Scottish writer and biographer, James Bowell (1740-1795), suggested that ladies would miss Stillingfleet's conversational contributions so much if he had not made an appearance at their soir e they would declare

We can do nothing without the blue stockings.