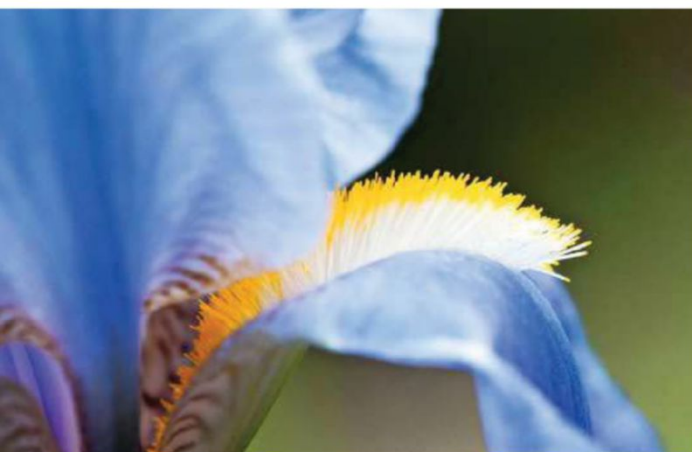


RAINBOW PRESENCE

Flowers of the many-coloured bearded iris put on a dazzling show, enhanced by ruffles, frills, lace and falls



Standing tall, this hybrid iris has delicate blue falls and standards (top).
The true species, *Iris pallida*, showing the furry beard which gives these iris their name (bottom).

BILLOWING IN THE breeze like sailing ships, the blooms of bearded iris fill the early summer garden with all the colours of the rainbow. Their large flowers combine beauty of form and purity of shade, as well as a subtle, sweet perfume. Easily recognised, these majestic flowers offer a beauty unrivalled by any other hardy perennial.

Growing from thickened horizontal stems, called rhizomes, bearded iris bloom as summer progresses, depending on the type. Carefully adapted to allow access for pollination by large bees, the flowers are remarkably complex. The three outer petals open wide and often droop at the tip. These are called falls. At the base of each is the furry beard, from which the name derives. This is usually showy and may be a different colour to the petals.

The large, prominent inner three petals usually stand erect, and again are often a different colour. These are the standards. Above the three beards is a single stamen, and above that is one arm of the three-branched stigma. This is often showy and petal-like. On the underside, near the end, is the stigmatic flap that catches the pollen from a visiting insect, under the style crest, a conspicuous, petal-shaped appendage.

Bearded iris are divided into different classes, based on size and flowering time. They range from miniatures to >

