



The curiously coloured plicata flowers of TB 'Provencal'.



With its bright yellow horizontal falls, 'Lune et Soleil' puts on a glowing display.

To survive, an iris needs more than beautiful flowers. Vigour and the number of buds also count. More buds on the stem mean more flowers and a longer season of bloom. Hardiness and a good name mean enduring fame.

### Careful placement

Because of the range in sizes, bearded iris can be fitted into many parts of the garden. Miniature Dwarfs are suitable for pots and rock gardens. They can be swamped in general borders, where Standard Dwarfs are better, especially at the front. These are strong growers, also doing well in gravel and on rockeries.

The bigger types are good in herbaceous borders, as long as they are not crowded out by bigger plants. Neighbours with upright or ferny foliage that does not cover the iris' rhizomes are best. Aquilegias and lupins, which flower at the same time, make spectacular companions. When out of flower, the sword-like leaves of iris add interest, and fit well with minimal-style plantings. Roses are good companions too, if care is taken not to mulch over the base of the iris.

Many modern varieties, such as 'Lune et Soleil', have horizontal falls and intriguing mixtures of colours. However, the hanging falls and simpler colours of the old cultivars tend to show up better in the garden from a distance. Their flaring falls also help reveal their beauty up close when viewed from above.

### Cultivation

Bearded iris have two periods of root growth, in spring and in late summer. This is when they should be planted, with July and August ideal, giving them time to make roots before winter. Potted iris can be planted at any time, but those planted in spring may be unsteady when they produce their first flower stems. These should be staked.

## SIX VARIETIES FOR SHOW

'Conjuration'	Delicately coloured flowers, with orange beards and fuzzy white horns. Height 40in (1m).
'Ghost Train'	Lots of dark purple ruffled flowers. Height 36in (90cm).
<i>Iris pallida</i> 'Variegata'	Small, fragrant lavender flowers, with primrose and grey striped leaves. Height 28in (70cm).
'World Premier'	Very vigorous, with large two-tone flowers in sky blue and inky purple. Height 38in (95cm).
'Silverado'	Broad, gently ruffled flowers in silvery lavender. Height 40in (110cm).
'Miami Beach'	Fragrant, pure yellow flowers, with gently ruffled petals and showy orange beards. Height 40in (1m).