



# WORLD OF WONDER

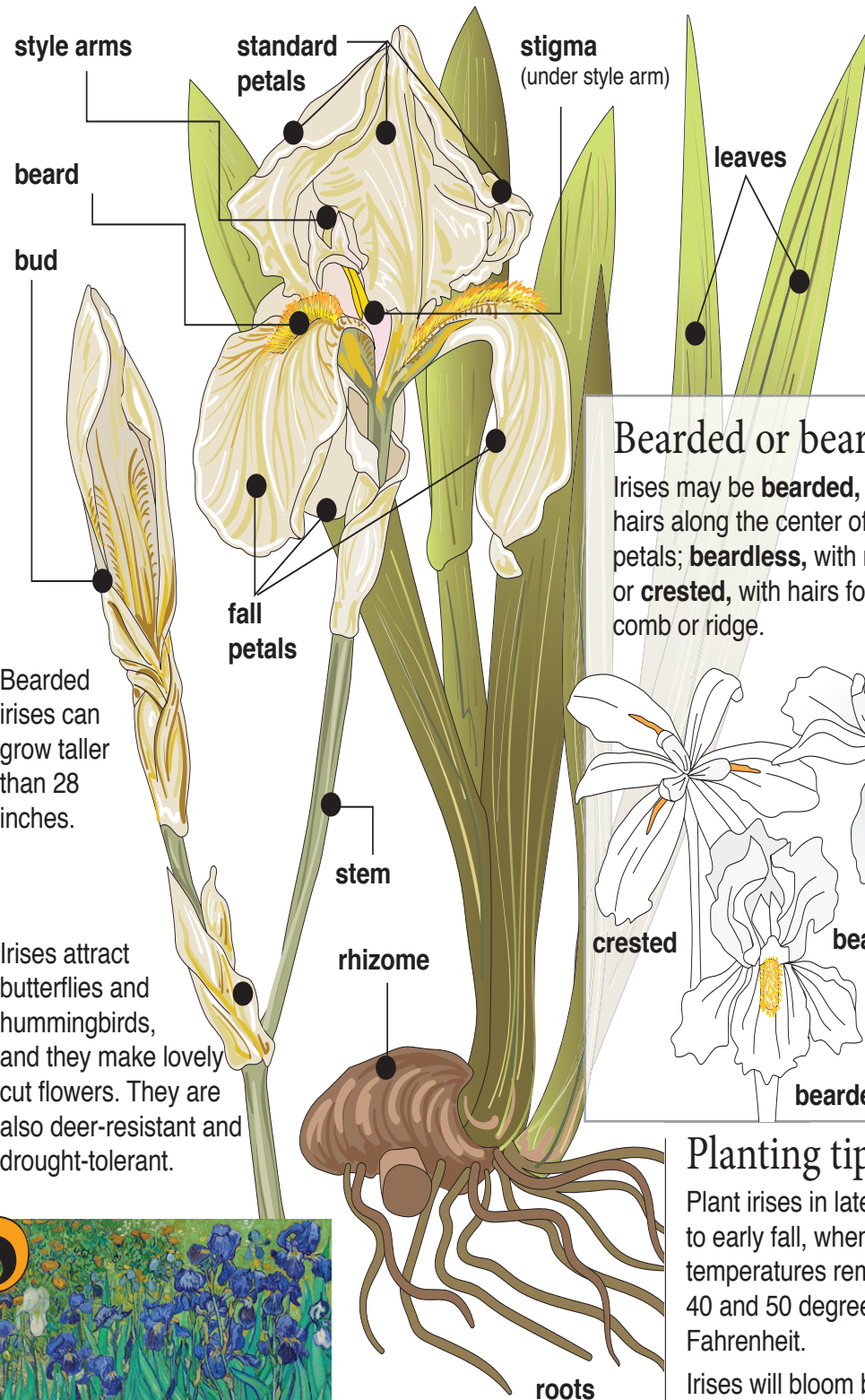
Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

# IRISES

Named after the Greek goddess who rode rainbows, the elegant and hardy iris has been favored by royal houses throughout history. Despite its noble background, this perennial is rugged and easy to grow and care for.

There are about 300 species of iris. Most irises flower in early summer. Some — mostly bearded hybrids — are **remontant**, flowering again later in the summer. Irises have distinctive six-petaled flowers, with three outer hanging petals (called “falls”) and three inner upright petals (called “standards”).

## Bearded iris



Bearded irises can grow taller than 28 inches.

Irises attract butterflies and hummingbirds, and they make lovely cut flowers. They are also deer-resistant and drought-tolerant.

These flowers are usually blue, but are sometimes lilac or white.

The blue flag iris is beardless.

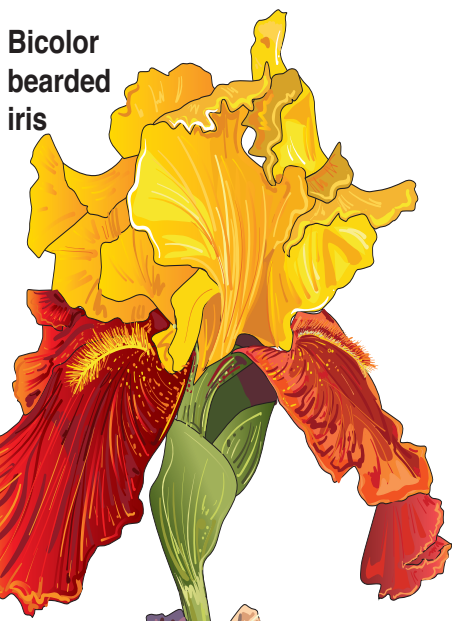
The dwarf lake iris is found only in the Great Lakes region.

This beardless iris is a threatened species.

Blue flag iris

The blue flag iris is native to eastern regions of North America.

## Bicolor bearded iris



Irises come in a variety of colors, such as purple, lavender, white, yellow, orange, pink, blue and brown.

The iris itself is a symbol of eloquence. Purple irises symbolize wisdom, while blue irises symbolize faith and hope.

## In a name

The name **iris** means “rainbow” in Greek. According to legend, the goddess Iris traveled to earth through a rainbow, and beautiful flowers appeared beneath her feet.

## Looking back

The ancient Greeks planted this flower over the graves of women, hoping that the goddess Iris would guide them. Irises were also planted in the gardens of ancient Egypt, where they came to symbolize the essence and renewal of life.

## Did you know?

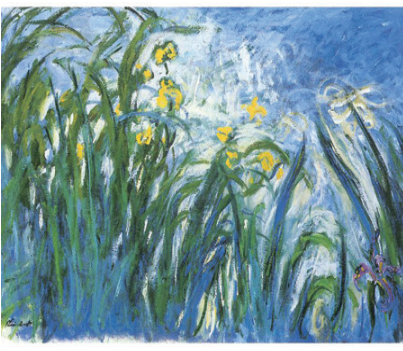
One of the earliest known artworks of an iris is a fresco in King Minos' palace on the Greek island of Crete. The palace dates from 2100 B.C. The French fleur-de-lis is a design based on the iris. The iris is also a symbol of Florence, Italy.

At one time, dried iris root was used medicinally as a cure for blood and lung diseases.

Teething babies were once given a “finger” of dried iris root to gnaw on, because it has pain-relieving properties.

Vincent van Gogh made a series of iris paintings. One of them, *Irises*, once sold for more than \$53 million.

Claude Monet also painted several beautiful iris paintings.



**Irises**  
1889, Vincent Van Gogh  
J. Paul Getty Museum,  
Los Angeles

**Yellow Irises and Malva**  
1924, Claude Monet  
Musée Marmottan Monet,  
Paris

## Planting tips

Plant irises in late summer to early fall, when nighttime temperatures remain between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Irises will bloom best in full sun but can survive in partial sun.

It's easy to make the mistake of planting irises too deep. The rhizomes of these plants should be partially exposed to the elements, or thinly covered with soil in hot climates.

Do not mulch around the rhizome as this may cause rot.

Water thoroughly. Irises tend to like wet feet but dry knees.

SOURCES: *World Book Encyclopedia*, World Book Inc.; <https://www.almanac.com>; <https://www.gardendesign.com>; <https://www.americanmeadows.com>; <https://www.thespruce.com>

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