



Himalayan Iris: Thriving in Temperate Forest to a Modern Cut Flower

(Neelam Thakur, Neha Thakur and Aruna Mehta)

College of Horticulture and Forestry, Thunag, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

*Corresponding Author's email: neelamthakur7t@gmail.com

Himalayan Iris, *Iris clarkei* belong to the family *Iridaceae*, is a rhizomatous herbaceous perennial found growing in Himalayas, from Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kashmir, North East India, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Burma and China. The iris plant with sword leaves is found flowering from early spring to early summer in the forest range of Seraj Region, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. The flowers are bluish violet with a contrasting yellow blotch embedded in flower tube. Fruit set leads to the formation of capsule in which seeds are semicircular, flat. It grows on damp, grassy hillsides and marshes, beside streams and lakes and also at the edge of rhododendron and Abies pine forests. It grows at altitudes of between 2,300 to 4,300 m (7,500 to 14,100 ft) above sea level. Sometimes, it grows as large masses of plants.

Iris, as a native plant of temperate Himalayan region, plays an important role in environment conservation. As a rhizomatous plant, it has extensive root system which binds the soil particle together reducing erosion and result in slope stability of hilly terrain during heavy rainfall. This native bulbous plant attracts the pollinators like bees, butterfly as a source of pollen, nectar and also provide shelter to native fauna. This contributes to biodiversity and ecosystem health. During the early spring to early summer, the violet -blue hue of this flower in masses enhance the natural landscape of native temperate region. This flower has potential to be grown as a native perennial landscape plant near waterbodies, grassy hillsides and moisture loving soil.

The modern cut flower iris, *Iris x germanica* is commercially grown for its cut flower and it is also grown as perennial landscape plant. It is propagated mainly by division of rhizomes and also by seed. The iris flower comes in various colour, including red, orange, yellow, blue, violet, purple, brown, white and pink. The name 'iris' comes this is beautiful perennial bulbous plant from the Greek word for rainbow, which is a fitting name as irises come in a wide range of colors. In the language of flowers, the iris has different meanings depending on its color. For example, the blue iris symbolizes hope and faith, while the white iris represents purity and innocence. The yellow iris is a symbol of passion, and the purple iris represents wisdom and compliments. The flower has three petals, which symbolize faith, wisdom, and valor.

The iris flower is not just beautiful to look at but also has some unique properties. The flower has a distinct fragrance that is often described as sweet and powdery. The scent of the iris is believed to have therapeutic properties, and it is used in aromatherapy to help reduce stress and anxiety. Apart from its fragrance, the iris flower has other beneficial properties as well. The root of the iris plant contains a substance called irisin, which is believed to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Irisin has been found to have potential uses in the treatment of several diseases, including cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes.

Types of Iris Flowers

There are over 200 species of iris flowers, each with its unique characteristics and properties. Here are some of the popular types of iris flowers.

BEARDED IRIS: The bearded iris is a popular garden plant and is known for its distinctive beard-like growth on its petals. The flower comes in a wide range of colors, including purple, yellow, and white, and is known for its stunning beauty and unique shape.

SIBERIAN IRIS: The Siberian iris is a hardy plant that is easy to grow and is a popular choice for gardeners. The flower comes in a range of colors, including blue, white, and yellow, and is known for its delicate petals and unique shape.

DUTCH IRIS: The Dutch iris is a popular choice for cut flowers and is known for its striking beauty and long stems. The flower comes in a range of colors, including blue, yellow, and white, and is often used in floral arrangements.

JAPANESE IRIS: The Japanese iris is a popular garden plant and is known for its large, showy flowers. The flower comes in a range of colors, including purple, blue, and white, and is often used in water gardens.

Uses of the Iris Flower

The iris flower has been used in various contexts throughout history. From ancient Greece to modern times, the iris has been a popular flower for decoration, medicinal purposes, and as a symbol of status and honor.

DECORATION: The iris flower is a popular choice for decoration, both in gardens and in homes. The flower's striking beauty and unique shape make it a favorite among gardeners and florists. Irises are commonly used to add color and elegance to bridal bouquets, center pieces, and floral arrangements.

MEDICINE: The iris plant has been used in traditional medicine for centuries. The root of the plant is believed to have therapeutic properties and has been used to treat a wide range of ailments, including skin conditions, respiratory problems, and digestive issues. The root of the iris is also used in the production of essential oils, which are used in aromatherapy to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

SYMBOLISM: The iris flower has rich symbolism and has been used to represent various concepts throughout history. In ancient Greece, the iris was a symbol of power and majesty, while in medieval times, it was used as a symbol of royalty. Today, the iris is often used as a symbol of respect, wisdom, and courage. The iris flower is also a popular choice for funerals and memorial services. The flower's elegant beauty and symbolism of eternal life make it a fitting tribute to those who have passed away.

Conclusion

The iris flower is not just a beautiful sight but also has rich symbolism and beneficial properties. With its striking beauty and unique shape, the iris has become a popular choice for various occasions, including weddings, funerals, and memorial services. The flower has also been used in traditional medicine and aromatherapy, and is a popular garden plant in many parts of the world.



References

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