

## Variegated Iris – *Iris variegata*

Aristotle's pupil and head of the peripatetic school in Athens, the philosopher and nature scientist Theophrastus (372-278 b.C.) , called them the only fragrant herb growing in the North. Variegated Iris have always been most appreciated for their fragrant rhizomes, which are used to produce oils and creams. The unmistakable shape of their flower turned them very early on into a popular item for gardeners and botanists. Already in the Antiquity, the plant was called Iris as its bloom was compared to the colors of the rainbow. Even then there were light blue, purple, white and other color variations. It was considered as a remedy for sleeping and menstrual disorders and, in the form of suppositories, to provoke abortions.

The monocotyledonous plants, from the crocus and gladioli family, distinguish themselves through their three external, protruding "hanging leaves" and their three internal, erect leaves. The apparent are

The common variegated irises in our gardens have thick rhizomes and differ in this from the indigenous wild type.

One assumes that variegated irises were introduced in South Eastern Europe under Charlemagne and then started growing wild. However, in the National Park Thayatal, grows a rare and endangered species, of which experts pretend that it originated only in Austria.

Very early on clones of the variegated iris were created, which were apparently already cultivated in gardens before 1800 and, crossed with bearded iris (*I. pallida*) and other types, were used to growing of a variety of other cultures.

The variegated iris shines in golden (style branches, dome) and purple red veining (hanging leaves), it prefers light dry-warm forests (pubescent oaks), borders and semi dry grassland. It has a thick but rather short rhizome and is found at heights of 150 to 1000 meters. It is considered as a special pannonian rarity and threatened (threat category 3 in the Red Lists).