



FORT TICONDEROGA

National Historic Landmark

Flower of the Week

phone: (518) 585-2821
fax: : (518) 585-2210
fort@fort-ticonderoga.org
PO Box 390
Ticonderoga, NY 12883

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Common Name: | Bearded Iris, German Iris |
| Botanical Name: | Iris x germanica |
| Family: | Iridaceae |
| Plant Type: | Herbaceous Perennial Flower |
| Season of Bloom: | Mid-spring to late spring |

The Greek philosopher and botanist Theophrastus christened this lovely group of plant **Iris**. In Greek mythology, Iris was the messenger of the gods and rainbow, and she escorted the departed souls from one life to another across her colorful bridge.

Louis VII of France adopted the purple iris as his symbol in 1147. Thus the **fleur-de-lys** became the symbol on the banner of France for the next 600 years. The fleur-de-lys is the emblem for the city of New Orleans and the iris bloom is the emblem of Florence, Italy.

The iris has a thick fleshy root called a *rhizome*. Egyptians and early Greeks and Romans cultivated the iris for medicinal purposes and for use in perfumery. Europeans also used the iris root to keep beer from going stale and to enrich the bouquet of certain wines. In Russia, in czarist days the root was used to flavor a soft drink that was made with honey and ginger and sold on the streets. Until the 1920s all violet-scented powders and perfumes were distilled from iris.

The iris genus contains about 200 species and countless hybrids. The Bearded Iris gets its name from the pattern of hairs on the basal half of the falls (lower petals).

