



IRIS FAMILY.

IRIDACEAE.

**Wild Iris.
Larger Blue Flag.**

Iris versicolor.

Found by runlets and in moist meadows, in June.

The rootstock sends up several leaves ensheathing the flower-stem.

The leaf is sword-shaped, long, narrow, and pointed, with, a narrow, light, ribbon-like finish to its edge; the inconspicuous ribs are grass-like. Its color is a cool, light green, with traces of dull violet near the foot. Several leaves overlap one another at the base.



The flower is large, with 9 petal-like parts, growing in sets of threes ; the 3 outer parts are broad, spreading, and curving downwards more or less,—in color violet, marked with white and yellow, and delicately lined with dark violet ; the 3 parts that alternate with these are smaller, erect, and taper to a narrow foot at the base,—in color they are violet ; the pistil is in 3 petal-like parts, which curve back, over the broad outer divisions, with a fine arch (under which the stamens may be found),—they are cleft at the tips, and in color are violet, darker at the tips, and reddish on the arch. The texture of the flower is exceedingly fine and delicate.

It grows from the summit of the 3-angled green seed-case, which is borne on a tall, leafy, green stem ; this stem is slightly flattened on opposite sides, and is smooth and polished of surface.

The ancients, who named this flower Iris, had a true appreciation of its rainbow-like qualities ; its texture is so ethereal that it seems to float in the grass, and to fade before our eyes like its evanescent namesake. It however replaces one day's bloom by another flowering, and keeps up a prolonged succession of blossoms from day to day.

“The fleur-de-lys, which is the flower of chivalry, has a sword for its leaf, and a lily for its heart.”

—Ruskin.

Upper photo: John Hixson, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Lower photo: Bennie Bengston, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Text and drawing excerpted from *Wildflowers from the North-Eastern States* by Ellen Miller and Margaret Christine Whiting, 1895
Nomenclature and Families updated.



WILD IRIS: *Iris versicolor*