

# *An Autumn Blooming Iris*

By B. Y. Morrison



SINCE writing the recent notes for the JOURNAL there has flowered in my garden another *Iris* which commands attention on account of its unusual flowering season as well as for its distinctive appearance. This is *Iris dichotoma*

I first saw the *Iris* blooming in the meadows at The Western Tombs, some ninety-odd miles northwest from Peking. The best plants were in the flat bottoms, near the broad wash where a stream raced through in the time of spring freshets, but there were scattered individual plants through the grass even up on the higher ridges under the trees of the temple groves. These latter plants were of far less vigorous growth, and the branching flower stalks bore fewer flowers. As it was the fourth of October the blooming season was nearly over and the seed pods of the first blossoms had reached mature size although they were not ripe. I collected a few plants which I sent to my headquarters in Japan. These did not survive the journey, as the roots were few and the time of moving was not the best.

The plants which I have now are from seed kindly sent me by my host, Dr. Meng, who gathered the seed later in the year and sent it by post. It reached me in late February, 1917, and was planted at once. In the dry soil of my garden the plants made small growth during that season but came safely through the severe winter of 1917 and this year bloomed freely. The first flowers opened on August 15, and the last came about the 20th of September. Some seed sent to a friend near Boston, made much better growth and several plants started to throw flower stalks the first year but were caught by the frost before maturing. All the Boston plants were lost in the winter of 1917.





IRIS DICHOTOMA  
AUTUMN FLOWERING



The plant forms a broad fan of vividly yellow green leaves from which rises the tall widely branching stalk. The drawing was made from a small plant gathered in China. Many flowers are borne in each of the heads which as well as the individual bloom lasts but a few hours. In China they opened about two o'clock and lasted till sundown, but here they delayed their opening until four o'clock by our war-time reading of the clock. On one of the stalks there were one hundred and twenty-six blooms. These flowers are small as compared to most *Iris*. The color is commonly a dull ivory white flushed with gold in the throat and speckled and blotched with purple which becomes chocolate when it is on the gold ground. I believe that all purple flowers have been reported. I did not see any and none of my seedlings have shown that variation. They have shown wide range in the amount of spotting and one flowered a pure white with only the flush of yellow in the throat.

I cannot believe that they will make a great addition to our garden flora for the flowers are not sufficiently showy, but for the person who likes the unusual, the autumn flowers show quite enough of intimate beauty to make up for any lack of size or brilliant color. There is in addition a faint but very delightful perfume. Whether the plants will prove perennial or not in this country, I do not know. Mr. Dykes writes that in England the plants are often so exhausted from the profuse blooming that they do not survive. In any case the seedlings are so easily raised that there should never be any difficulty in keeping the plant.



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