



PATRICK BLANC

The vertical garden artist finds a verdant friend in *Iris japonica*.

PALE BLUE AND WHITE blooms flecked with purple and orange. Sharp, dark green leaves. Not only is *Iris japonica* beautiful, it's easy to grow, flourishing naturally on slopes. And, although it prefers partial woodland shade, it's sturdy enough for more arid areas. This is a clue as to why botanist/scientist Patrick Blanc reaches for this greenery more than any other when creating his striking plant displays. Blanc, the world's foremost vertical garden artist, has completed hundreds of installations. He can turn nearly any surface—from the lush, exterior wall at Musée du quai Branly in Paris to the “rainforest chandelier” spooling like verdant DNA through the center of Bangkok's luxury EmQuartier mall—into a striking, biodiverse work of art. “*Iris japonica* can stand many kinds of climates,” Blanc says. “Because of its volume and leaf shape, it's a key species in many of my designs.” But there is a limit to his relationship with his favorite. “I won't use it in a very hot climate,” Blanc says. “You won't find it in my project in Riyadh.”

— JENNY ADAMS



- ▶ **At two years**, *Iris japonica* reaches maturity and may grow to a height of 3 feet.
- ▶ **This exotic**, Japanese/Chinese perennial blooms in early spring and late summer.
- ▶ **Pretty but poisonous**, this is a plant you want to avoid consuming.

FLOWER POWER

Iris are popping up in Memphis and Tokyo and online.



1 Hungry in Memphis? Visit **Restaurant Iris**, where chef Kelly English plates award-winning modern French-Creole cuisine.



2 In Tokyo, 14,000 blooms from hundreds of species are on display each June at the **Katsushika Shobu Matsuri Iris Festival**.



3 A bottle of **Prada's Infusion d'Iris perfume**, hailed by the company as “precious” and “elusive,” costs roughly \$100 for 3.4 ounces.